

NOX PHILOLOGIAE

Aulus Gellius and the Fantasy of the Roman Library

Erik Gunderson



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*Aulus Gellius and the
Fantasy of the Roman Library*

ERIK GUNDERSON

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NOX PHILOLOGIAE



*Aulus Gellius and the
Fantasy of the Roman Library*

by ANONYMOUS

Edited and with an introduction by

ERIK GUNDERSON

Praefatio Editoris

Now that the first printing of this volume has long since become generally unavailable and is only to be found with some difficulty on the dustiest shelves of select antiquarian bookshops, the hour has perhaps arrived to make the *Nox Philologiae* broadly accessible once again for the benefit of contemporary readers. At a minimum, the history of classical scholarship is a vital element of the discipline of classics itself. And in that spirit I might justly offer this text to the public. It is my hope, though, that there is nevertheless more on offer in the *Nox* than just the fodder for some incidental footnotes in books yet to come. I would wish that readers might find something to amuse and even to edify in this strange little book of yesteryear. “Nothing odd will do long,” said Dr. Johnson. And yet my memories of reading this are lasting. I like to imagine that others as well will derive from it pleasures that are, if not even greater, at least as enduring.

Nox Philologiae

Un roman historique

du futur antérieur

by

Anonymous



Quaeri solitum est, qui noctis hora tertia quartaue siue qua alia nati sunt, uter dies natalis haberi appellarique debeat, isne, quem nox ea consecuta est, an qui dies noctem consecutus est.

Quaesitum est, quando moriens moreretur: cum iam in morte esset, an cum etiamtum in uita foret?

Ταρασσει τοὺς Ἀνθρώπους οὐ τὰ Πράγματα, ἀλλὰ τὰ περὶ τῶν Πραγμάτων, Δογματά.

Die Eule der Minerva beginnt erst mit der einbrechenden Dämmerung ihren Flug.

[facsimile of the original title page]

D.M.
DOMITII INSANI

si tibi post cineres uitalia saecula curae . . .

PRAEFATIO



Ἀλλοποίησις

I

Quid sit grammaticos legere; et qua ratione de eis scripserimus.

... they can find other, more agreeable pursuits. And so also do I worry about the future, about the fate of books and bookishness, of children and childishness. Is it our business to relax, or are we to indulge in perpetual study? Is the distinction in fact distinct? Are the bibliophile's pleasures unprincipled or really regulated? Behold items that have gotten stuck in one memory and are to be disseminated as so many irritating grains of sand about which pearly erudition might gather as a function of indigestion. A feast of pearls is culled from the pens of swine.

Let us choke on our cheesy knowledge as we wolf it down but nevertheless reflect that we did but lately see at Athens not only a sword swallowed but a delicious pervert simultaneously disgorged. Apuleius offers one portrait of the Second Sophistic at Rome.¹ Are there others? Can we give ear to the pipings of Aulus Gellius and pay him his due without marching off into oblivion like so many doomed children of the book?

What does it mean to read the antiquarians? What does it mean to write on them? Where do the world of the book and the book of the world meet? And is this paratopological intersection something indexed, or is it instead experienced directly? Does one comment on the antiquarians or merely with them? Did they know you were coming? Is your book already on their shelf?

1. Anderson 1990:96–99 offers a brief sketch of what the whole might look like. Harrison 2000 delivers the corresponding full-scale study. Sandy 1997:49–88 provides an overview of the relationship between the tastes of Fronto, Gellius, and Apuleius and how these relate to the Second Sophistic more broadly. Compare Champlin 1980:56–59 on Fronto's relationship to the Second Sophistic.

II

Quid et quantum differat Gellius ab aliis scriptoribus.

To judge from the indices of books on Roman topics, Aulus Gellius is one of the most-read ancient authors. To judge from the contents of those same books, he is one of the least-read authors.² Gellius is everywhere and nowhere, everyman and No-man, and our own intellectual Odyssey routinely sails the wine-dark seas of knowledge without once really reading this insatiable reader. Always overfull of Gellius before we even decide not to pick him up, we instead have gotten used to reading him without reading him.

The experience of reading Gellius, or any of the antiquarians for that matter, is distinctive. First, they are not in fact all the same even if they frequently seem to be cut from the same parti-colored and patchwork cloth. Thus, there is nothing quite like Gellius. Nor, for that matter, is there anything quite like Macrobius when he plunders Gellius. Next, these books are clearly not meant to be read as one habitually reads. Or rather, they are meant to be read both as one habitually reads and as one never reads. To read Gellius cover-to-cover is an absurd proposition. Its only equal would be to fail to read him thus. The text is all middle even as it constantly begins and just as routinely ends. One has the feeling that, like Scheherazade, the storyteller is deferring something terrible while simultaneously making an offer of the pleasure, vitality, and fertility of discourse itself. We are invited to get lost in knowledge. But more than that, we are invited to get lost in a world where knowledge is accumulated and circulated by men who have themselves been long wandering in the library. The Attic Nights as Arabian, then. Or the Library of Alexandria as the Library of Babel. Gellius as Borges.

The antiquarians are hopelessly familiar to us. Their interest in irrelevant minutiae, odd uses, and stray knowledge has spawned contempt. It is a special kind of contempt, though, as it is the τόκος of our own (dis)interest in antiquarians. We want to find here a second self, an *alter idem*, but as such a foe and no friend. To read them is to run the risk of reading ourselves.

For example, who is being described in the following passage? “The work of tracing ‘loci similes,’ passages in one author which recall those in another, is the bread and butter of traditional classical literary study. Long

2. Compare the “Introductory Remarks” of Braund and Wilkins 2000:1: “Few modern scholars admire Athenaeus. But then few would claim even to have read him. His principal and only extant work, the *Deipnosophistae*, is treated usually (if at all) as a quarry, from which fragments of earlier texts can be hacked out and put to use, perhaps re-arranged.”

in the grip of a positivistic hunt for sources for ‘Quellenforschung,’ such study has classified these literary phenomena as ‘influences,’ or, more concretely as ‘sources’ (a revealing metaphor for fluidity), rather than in terms of texts and the structuring of texts. Without a basic model of literary production, I would argue, the philologist’s collecting of comparative and contrastive materials (loans, debts, parallels, etc.) suffers from what I may disrespectfully name ‘comparisonitis’—collecting for the sake of collecting. My approach is quite different.”³

An idea: it might be more useful to speak instead of antiquarian literature and then to emphasize the literary quality of that discourse. We can find characters, themes, subplots, drama, comedy, the disarming aside. If Gellius is often too dull, he is just as often too interesting. The challenge is to alienate Gellius from a self and other dialectic: Gellius as neither *alter* nor *idem*; Gellius as a good friend to sit and think with for it. The problem is as much the surfeit of material that is not pedantic minutiae as it is the pedanticism itself.⁴ We need, then, to become aware of the wholes that we are constantly fabricating from parts, parts that we no longer perceive as disparate. We need to tear apart our own ready-made syntheses and confront our pile of scraps with Gellius’s. This will serve as a prelude to deciding what we will ourselves say when we are called upon to speak next in the course of the dialogic exchange that circulates at the table of the erudite.

3. Conte 1986:23.

4. Compare Davidson 2000 and his attempt to formulate the paradox of “pleasure and pedantry” in Athenaeus.

PRAEFATIO ALTERA



Idemdem

I

Quid sit de grammatica scribere; et qua ratione libros de ea legerimus.

The Oxford Classical Text of the *Noctes Atticae* contains two *praefationes*. One begins with the words *Omnium qui extant Gellii codicum uetustissimus idemque optimus est codex rescriptus Vaticanus Palatinus 24 (A) litteris rusticis saeculo quarto scriptus*.¹ The other starts *** *iucundiora alia reperire queunt*. . . . One is written by P. K. Marshall. The other by Aulus Gellius as recovered and set forth by P. K. Marshall. Only a fool would confuse the two. Only a certain perverse sagacity would align them. I propose that we have much to learn if we are willing to engage in just such a sophomoric and morosophistic exercise. We ought at least to observe that the very first trope of that first preface is Gellian in the extreme. One cannot mention the books of Gellius without turning into Gellius. The commentary on Gellius is ghost written by Gellius himself: the oldest is the best. I hunted up all the books; I sifted them; the rustic one wins out over the effete and lax latecomers. Rewriting the story of this *codex rescriptus* brings a flush of excitement: the Gellian capitals sit today on the Palatine inviting us to virtuous study.

Even if the second preface, the “real” preface, begins in the middle of a sentence, we are already long since in the middle of Gelliana. Moreover it is not at all clear that anything but a middle would make for a fitting beginning to Gellius’s text. Still, I wish to offer a commentary on this “opening” inasmuch as it is a programmatic statement concerning the diverse programs pursued within the text. This same preface is also programmatic for the history of scholarship on Gellius. One almost invariably identifies

1. Marshall 1990:v.

Gellius the author, Gellius the narrator, and Gellius the character within the text. This narratological nicety should never be forgotten by the scrupulous reader, and yet the text constantly encourages just such a forgetting. The subject who masters the truth of the text sees within the text a blurring of layers between listener and speaker, writer and reader, speech and text, storyteller and person of whom stories are told. Even as I myself reproduce the confusion of these registers below, it is vital to the functioning of the *Noctes* that they be thus confused. Marshall-as-Gellius is but the first indication of this phenomenon, a phenomenon that occurs, it will be noted, both “before” and “after” the *Noctes* proper begin. And yet much as the *Noctes* never properly begin, neither do they properly end.

I am offering my own introduction to a commentary on the commentaries on Gellius. Have no fear; I am not spiraling away from Gellius: when it comes to antiquarians the metadiscourse is always both an after-discourse and a with-discourse.² Efforts to stand outside the text and to comment objectively on it tend only to be so many poses struck standing right next to the text and with a self-conscious glance back at it, as if looking into some mirror.³ A fragmentary self is seen in reflection, a reflection that offers an orthopedics of the whole: to any who can form a totality from this *corpus morcelé*. Nevertheless, the initial reaction to the *unheimlich* encounter with the mirror image is hostile. The other is an enemy who keeps me from feeling at home in his text. Nevertheless, our maneuvers to adapt ourselves to this other place produce a sense of ourselves as whole. Concomitantly the other’s alterity evanesces.

My own second and Gellian prelude thus sets itself two tasks: first, to make a beginning with Gellius’s beginning; next, to make a break with the others’ attempts to get the last word in when discoursing with Gellius albeit in the guise of discoursing on him. The reward is identical with the risk: an uncanny Gellius both promises and threatens to leave us strangers to ourselves.

2. “[D]e Lubac presents his multivolume study as consisting entirely of a commentary on a passage from the prologue to a commentary on a text: better yet, *Exégèse médiévale* describes itself as an exegesis of an exegetical directive . . . instructing its medieval readers how to understand the exegesis performed in the text they are about to read . . . , which in turn constitutes a massive exegesis of its source text, the Holy Bible” (Holsinger 2005:167).

3. “Criticism and its object, often projected as separate, can also be seen as operating within similar assumptions and implicated in the same discursive strategies” (Kennedy 1993:1–2. Compare Kennedy 1993:85–86.

II

Quae causa quodque initium fuisse dicatur nobis ad grammaticorum litteras adeundi.

Our relationship to the antiquarians is fundamentally doubled and duplicitous. They are our friends, our neighbors, our brothers, our foes, strangers, objects of a murderous rage, a *turba Remorum*. The bifurcation of the relationship should be staged precisely as such: we meet them at a crossroads, so many fathers we do not recognize, with whom we quarrel. But our curse is to strike them dead and to take from them their wife, the fair Philologia. For she bestirs in us a curiosity to know of origins. And yet there is a riddle here that we would do best not to solve. They are also the *Nebenmensch* who both affirms and disrupts our sense of reality. They are neighbors whom we cannot love as ourselves.⁴ The antiquarians are many things to us, even as they are pointedly nothing to us: read and unread, loved and despised, same and other.

Read Malcovati's *Fragments of the Roman Orators*. Note how often you are perusing Gellius. Page through the fragments of Pacuvius. You are reading Gellius fragmented. We conspire to conjure away the antiquarian. This *coniuratio* aims at a reactionary coup. Our old friend Ennius is restored to himself and to us. If we are unable to stand directly before the man as a whole, we can at least marvel at some well-cleaned parts. The body of Ennius, a *corpus* in pieces and reassembled as best one may: it is carved from the carcass of Gellius, who is thrown out and forgotten, a prey to dogs and birds.

Always stepping, always backward, marching forward athetically by saying no to pleasure and the unprincipled: *pas de thèse, pas de plaisir*.⁵ To step back yet again, then: What were the antiquarians up to? Why? How did they go about their business? How did they organize things? What did they tell themselves about what they were doing? More abstractly: What were the conditions of production, reproduction, and dissemination of knowledge?⁶ What counted as knowledge? How are the answers to these questions related to our own knowledge?

Why so much time/energy on Aulus Gellius? Certainly another could have been chosen, perhaps someone earlier. And a Greek, of course: they

4. See Lacan 1992:39, 51, and 76.

5. See Derrida 1987:293.

6. Compare Schmitz 1997:26–31, where he explores the circuits of symbolic power in the Second Sophistic via Bourdieu. See also, then, Bourdieu 1991:50–52. Too 1998 attempts to rethink the complex relationships between power and pedagogy both inside antiquity itself and from the perspective of the subsequent reception and reuse of antiquity.

invented everything but for the everything they got from elsewhere. But if we are talking of Rome and the Latin tradition, why not write of Ennius himself, the scholarly poet, or how about one of the earliest commentators on Ennius?⁷ If one must have longer works, then Varro might do nicely. He is the Vergil of Antiquarians: not the first, but the one who might as well be the first. Only a real hard-core archaizer would need to go back any further and find Varro's Ennius.

I am not interested in finding the first antiquarian, the true antiquarian.⁸ Though the gesture is almost entirely inescapable, it entails an antiquarianism of antiquarianism.⁹ It reperforms rather than inquires. An account of Varro as antiquarian is perhaps impossible without assembling as well the numerous fragments of Varro to be found only in Gellius. I have no interest, though, in compiling the original compilation, in locating the moment of emergence of the disparate in its "purity." Let us set to one side any notion of a "purity of origins," a highly suspect intellectual contrivance.¹⁰ Instead of investing in the first, the whole, and the pure, we will look at instantiations of the practice of antiquarianism qua practice. This entails looking at the last, the scattered, the all-too-worldly. Of course, this can be no mere view from afar, nor a disinterested survey despite the vague longing that it be such.

I propose examining a specific archive in its dispersion rather than developing a theory of the form of the archive and therewith a unitary theory of diversity.¹¹ Moreover, folded into Gellius himself there is a tale of the tale of antiquarianism. We can track this story of story collection as it unfolds in the dramatic space and time of the *Noctes*. We can engage in the novel and perverse act of reading Gellius as a novel wherein the neurosis

7. Habinek 1998:54: "Latin literature of the early classical period both participates in the invention of tradition and makes itself a part of the tradition that is being invented." In the late Latin world of Gellius, the issue is more tradition as text than it is tradition as practice.

8. See Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 14.6.3: Gellius knows who the first grammarian is, but he withholds the name. But for those who must have a name named, Marache 1952:62–66 offers Valerius Probus, a critic of the Neronian age, as the man who set the pattern for the kind of work that is most characteristic of Gellius and his contemporaries. Marache's whole book tracks the convoluted history of "the ancient" for the Romans.

9. See Sandy 1997:83 on the "childish" quality of the question who was first? lists in antiquity. Grown men spent their time otherwise.

10. Pelling 2000:186–88 flags a horrific possibility for source criticism: creative misquotation on the part of the bibliophile as part of the learned game itself.

11. Note that my use of the word "archive" is itself loose and specifically evocative of Foucault and Derrida, not the "technical" issue of archiving in antiquity. For an introduction to that manifold story, see Brosius 2003. Ceccarelli 2004 observes that this is but a fragment of the story.

of collection is present as both theory and practice. But this perverse approach to the perversity of the *Noctes* is by no means a subversion of the text and a radical exposé of a long-hidden secret about it. Recursivity, a self-relation, a theory of the book that contains all the other books: such is Gellius triumphant, not toppled from his throne.

In Gellius, we find a variety of meditations on what it means to be a Roman, a scholar, and an antiquarian. Gellius tells us many explicit details of the circulation of knowledge, but this is only half the story. We find also “acts of knowing,” competition between knowers, accreditation and dismissal, yoking and segregation, inclusion and exclusion. When reading Gellius one enters a world where life is a permanent graduate seminar. This is a frightening thought, I know. There is not only learned discussion and research into a variety of purportedly interesting topics, but we also find competition, jockeying for position, constant evaluation, and the cutting rebuttal. The young in particular suffer at the hands of the old even as they learn therewith to suppress youth in turn.

We can see here both the society of the book and the book of society. Or perhaps we could extend this and say that we see both the book of the society of the book and the society of the book of society. That is, representation and reality fold back in on themselves and spiral into a sort of abyss. And yet this is not a negative regress but instead a fertile one, a maelstrom from which the text emerges rather than into which it descends. This is a non-place where one finds not just the *disiecta membra* of books cannibalistically swallowed like the children of Saturn, but so too the constitution of a new but related order when Jove springs imperiously from the belly of his father, a Saturnalian moment taken most seriously by the servants of knowledge who now play at mastery.

It is no accident, then, that Macrobius rewrites—or even fails to rewrite—Gellius when folding him into his *Saturnalia*. Gellius the author of shards is shredded and recomposed so as to forge a whole.¹² The diverse feast of Gellius remains in its diversity, and yet it is now presented as a single event and a discrete set of meals. Macrobius’s perversity consists in his sense of the whole, in his construction of unity, in his showing us the rules of appropriation such that we too can turn ourselves into ancient Romans by way of devouring their table scraps and serving them up to one another all over again. But Macrobius in the same gesture reveals the need for us to consider what it means to “author” knowledge, to be the author of an

12. Sharrock 2000 provides an excellent introduction to the problem of wholes and parts for readers of ancient texts.

assemblage of other authorities, particularly when those other texts are themselves scattered.¹³ We ourselves forge coherent accounts out of the hopelessly diverse so that we can speak of “slaves at Rome,” “the history of Roman religion,” or do both at once and more. The *Saturnalia* proves us to be friends of Macrobius in more senses than one. To the extent that we gravitate toward his version of narrating knowledge, though, we prove ourselves as well to be anti-Gellian amid our Gellianism. Gellius disappears; we fabricate a *corps-no-longer-morcelé*.

III

Ad philosophum Taurum Athenas uisendi cognoscendique eius gratia uenerat V. C., praeses Cretae prouinciae, et cum eo simul eiusdem praesidis pater.

So many beginnings; so many (false) starts: a worthy offering made to Gellius himself. For how does he get started if not fitfully, diversely? Gellius provides a map to the labyrinth, but only by way of exposing its complexity rather than handing over the thread of hermeneutic salvation. Moreover, once inside the maze we will find that a wise Bull lurks at Athens. Cretan leaders seek him out.¹⁴ This new mythology of erudition inverts familiar tales. The *Effekt* is *Verfremdung*; the ποίησις is τὸ ἀλλοιοῦν.

Who is Gellius? Is the beast waiting for us at the decentered heart of the *Noctes* the marvelous artificer, the author and his intentions? The text maps out a life that is literary. Reading the literature for the life is both necessary and a maze of dead ends. The life is constituted for us as a set of significant signifiers. The moments are not only each and in themselves “telling” but so also do these tales tell tales on one another as each of the parts comes to communicate with the elaborate network of the whole. As a “representation” or “reflection” of Gellius and his interests, the *Noctes Atticae* represents his interest in representations and reflects the myriad reflections cast off by the shards of knowledge so laboriously broken into pieces in the very act of their assembly. The whole is not-whole. The sum is both more and less than the parts. Good luck finding the true reflection of Gellius in this broken mirror, even were you to spend seven ill-starred years at it.

The *Noctes Atticae* is indeed an autobiography, but it proceeds according to a different conception of what a “life” is, and indeed of who the

13. “To assemble a book”: this is a problem for readers of Pliny the Elder as well. See Murphy 2004:9.

14. I am abusively alluding to *Noctes Atticae* 2.2.1: *Ad philosophum Taurum Athenas uisendi cognoscendique eius gratia uenerat V. C., praeses Cretae prouinciae, et cumeo simul eiusdem praesidis pater.*

autos is whose graphemes will transcribe said *bios*. Gellius is most inclined to cover the following topics: what I read; who I talked with; what I thought memorable. If the result is a sense that we are seeing a portrait of “my life in/as books,” it is also just as clear that Gellius’s hybridity and life-as-literature are themselves both modeled after the practice of his peers and cribbed from the books he has been reading.¹⁵ A second set of topics attaches itself to the first: what was being read in the books I read; what were my interlocutors reading; what was written down to be remembered? And then there is a third version: who was talking in what I read? This last permutation does not turn into yet another set of three, though. It washes back to suffuse the whole scene of the *Noctes Atticae* and all its layers with a special light. For the notion of “who was talking in what I read” is something that affects (and effects) us as well: Is Gellius talking? What do we make of the other “speakers”? What do we remember? But one thing can be counted on: everyone is talking about reading and reading about talking.

Gellius says, in effect, “Here is the knowledge I excavated: now you too should excavate it if you want to know me.” And if we attend to the problem of the addressee, Gellius’s hypothetical statement can be extended: “. . . if you want to become whom you ought to become.”¹⁶ You are potentially the next Gellius. Or rather, I read Gellius, I recapitulated his gesture, and I become in these pages the next Gellius. Now you are invited to become the next next Gellius not by reading the original but instead by encountering the apograph.

This is an “infinity” question, and a question that can be asked of the *Noctes*: Where does this end, where does it begin? What are the rules of this form of knowledge? Is it recursive? Is it exhaustive? What actually bounds it? What is claimed as its boundary? Many readers will see these as “post-modern” questions unfairly foisted upon Gellius. One has been little inclined to mistake Gellius for either Borges or Foucault. I make this mistake in the end, but only after paving the way for this error.¹⁷

15. See Whitmarsh 2001:55–56 on Plutarch’s strategic blurring of life and literature where the latter permeates the former. Compare Whitmarsh 2000:169–70 for the same phenomenon in Favorinus. Both of these authors are either immediately or proximately members of Gellius’s own milieu. See also Bompaigne 1958:536 on Lucian: “Les modèles livresques ne sont pas un simple point d’appui, un refuge accessoire, ils constituent le «système» à l’intérieur duquel se meut normalement et presque instinctivement Lucien. Système que n’est nullement un prison.”

16. Compare “become what you already are” in Porter 2000:117, 183, 191, and 197.

17. See the epilogue of Feeney 1998. His book ends by exhorting us not to forget Foucault when encountering Roman knowledges.

What prevents Gellius himself from inviting us to meditate on those questions, then? What center that lies at the core of Gellius's thought has sufficient mass to allow the whole to cohere rather than to explode infinitely outward? Rather than pull the rabbit out of my hat later, I'll posit now and demonstrate below that it is in fact the sense of a center that produces the center, the idea of a self that is a coherent core that lends a coherence and a core. The construction of a knower specifically situated within a community of knowledge acts as a break on any result wherein knowledge would talk to itself and books would whisper to one another in a manner that would render the author not just dead but utterly superfluous to begin with. The author as concrete individual is always at a minimum "along for the ride" in Gellius: even if he only listens and records, that is enough. He "is" still "there." At the zero degree, he is his act of listening. He is his act of recording.

IV

Itaque quae philologia fuit facta philosophia est.

Given this "functionalist" definition of antiquarianism, it is clear that I am not much interested in the "history of antiquarianism" as a history. In fact, the modality of antiquarianism sets itself athwart history in both a practical and a theoretical sense.¹⁸ If the antiquarian accumulates, he also accumulates accumulations and piles up the already piled up. In practice, then, the antiquarian is interested in the old and the first, but he is always also interested in the "other firsts" and the variations of the story of origins. Furthermore, the antiquarian is also interested in who told the tale of origins and who retold the telling. And so forth.

The sense of the preciousness of the historical event, the pure and irreplaceable moment in which "something happened" and where that which "really happened" emerges into reality as a unique and necessary link in an unending concatenation of cause and effect, such a sensibility is almost entirely lacking in the antiquarians. Joan Copjec critiques historicism's "illiteracy in desire" and remarks that "[d]isregarding desire, one constructs a reality that is *realtight*."¹⁹ Antiquarianism is a species of a desire for knowledge that forestalls the closure of history/historicism. Rather than rushing after the disavowed and obscene *jouissance* of know-it-all and all-is-known historical knowledge, the antiquarian mode instead collects reports of

18. Fox 1996:3 makes a useful related point: we might ultimately need to discard the rigid distinction between Roman historian and Roman antiquarian.

19. Copjec 1994:14, original emphasis.

existences and happenings and catalogs them as reports destined for cataloging. History is thus not even story; it is an entry in a ledger. Moreover, the relationship between journal entries is not arranged chronologically. Causation is deprecated. The desire of the archivist comes instead to the fore: was something scarce? unusual? witty? surprising?

Accordingly, if we produce a history of the antiquarians, we already depart from the logic of their practice. Naturally one need not march in lockstep with our authors, but willfully standing aside from them before the journey is even begun shows us not just bad companions but likely errant ones as well. Were we true to our originals, we would be more inclined to deprecate originality, to collect only a list of names of antiquarians, and we would be hesitant to rank them out of anything more than a sort of partisanship for their collections rather than their novelty. The antiquarian questions of antiquarianism are, then, Who first collected? Who says he first collected? What are the alternate stories of the first collection? Who has collected the various versions of the first collectors? In short, the logic of sets immediately intervenes and displaces the point singularity of the event.

The antiquarians are genealogists manqués. They revere origins, but in practice they revere their own reverence for the past more than the past itself. They consume the past in such an indiscriminate manner that the story of the great stadium at Olympus is also the story of debating Hercules' athlete's foot. They love books so much that whole tracts are reduced to a remark about the spelling of a single word. Excessive love of the least thing means of necessity setting to one side the most. The giants of the past are viewed at such a close distance that one can no longer even look up to them. All that can be seen are pores and hair follicles as the Lilliputians set to the task of binding an errant Gulliver.

The antiquarians are thus archaeologists manqués. They sift and arrange the past. But they do so less as critics of power than as gay scientists luxuriating within it. The archive animates them. The radical possibility of reassembling different orders of things, different *mots et choses*, is for them only the radical possibility of being shot through with word-power and wielding the same among and against one's peers.

"What did the Romans really think about antiquarians?" What kind of answer are you looking for here? Is it a history of the noble beginning of the art and its subsequent decay? A tale of the good scholars and the bad? A blanket statement about the role of erudition as a whole? I could note that much about ancient scholarship itself is not all that noble despite the pedigree that Gellius seems to give it: Cato, Varro, Cicero, . . . Fronto,

Taurus, Favorinus, . . . In fact, it is doubly ignoble: I could trot out the shabby genealogies of many antiquarians,²⁰ and I could also mock the fruits of their labors in contradistinction to my own well-tempered criticism. Ancient testimony always helps. I might cite Seneca, *Epistula* 88.36–46. Book 13 of his letters ends with a mockery of antiquarianism. Later he snorts, “And thus what was once philosophy has been turned into philology.”²¹ Moral philosophy scoffs at pedantry. The serious intellectual exiles the philologist.²²

But are these citations of mine a history or even a piece of history? Is this tale of good and bad learning not itself a highly partisan one? Have I taken my quotes out of context? Is my gesture, then, just more antiquarianism as I log the entries of anti-antiquarian thought? Note, then, that Gellius too rails against pedantry. And yet he would seem to be one of the worst offenders. This text can argue against itself while nevertheless remaining distinctly itself. Antiquarianism scoffs at logic where it does not feel inclined to merely archive it.

20. Kaster 1995 has done all the hard work. Now one need only consult his index under the relevant entries. See Kaster 1995:305 for what may be a semicomical overcompensation: the “heroic genealogy” of Epiidius.

21. *Itaque quae philosophia fuit facta philologia est* (Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 108.23). The phrase is inverted by Nietzsche to “What was philology has become philosophy.” This maxim runs as a leitmotif through Porter’s reappraisal of Nietzsche’s relationship to philology (Porter 2000). Sandy 1997:89 takes Seneca’s original version as a valid critique of his own and later ages, including that of Gellius.

22. See Henderson 2004:101–4 on Seneca the Antiquarian and his epic rewrite of Ennian scholarship: dabbling in/meddling with the archives rounds the first tropological bend on a journey that ultimately strives to sing a sage song of the topological self.

PRAEFATIO TERTIA



Praefatio Gellii

I

Quid senserit dixeritque Aulus Gellius in praefatione sua.

Enough beating around the bush. Let us read. Let us read Gellius reading. Let us look for the rules of the game as set forth by Gellius as he opens his text. This is an important, a necessary task. But it is also a difficult one: the opening remarks of Gellius both are and are not adequate to what follows. Moreover the commentary on Gellius has too often missed the letter of Gellius while reproducing only the spirit. Let us instead look for the spirit of the letter as well as the letter of the spirit.

<NOCTIVM ATTICARVM PRAEFATIO>

* * * iucundiora alia reperiri queunt, ad hoc ut liberis quoque meis partae istiusmodi remissiones essent, quando animus eorum interstitutione aliqua negotiorum data laxari indulgerique potuisset. Vsi autem sumus ordine rerum fortuito, quem antea in excerpendo feceramus. Nam proinde ut librum quemque in manus ceperam seu Graecum seu Latinum uel quid memoratu dignum audieram, ita quae libitum erat, cuius generis cumque erant, indistincte atque promisce annotabam eaque mihi ad subsidium memoriae quasi quoddam litterarum penus recondebam, ut, quando usus uenisset aut rei aut uerbi, cuius me repens forte obliuio tenuisset, et libri, ex quibus ea sumpseram, non adessent, facile inde nobis inuentu atque depromptu foret.

... other more agreeable things can be found; additionally, in order to spawn for my children as well similar leisure during some pause in their affairs and so that their spirit can be given free play and indulged. I made use, though, of that chance order of things that my process of excerpting

had yielded. For just as I had taken into my hands some book or other, a Greek one, a Latin one, or if I had heard something worth recalling, thus just as it pleased me and no matter what sort these items were, I would mark them down without distinction and promiscuously. And I laid these up like some storehouse of literature. They are my memory's ready reserve: when the occasion for a word or a thing might arrive, if creeping forgetfulness might have seized me and my books whence I had taken these things were not to hand, I would nevertheless easily find and draw off what I needed.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 1–2

We begin the beginning of our epic of erudition *in medias res*. The children appear first, but only as an appendix to some other idea. They might read this “time permitting.” And here Gellius uses, as is his wont, a very technical term: *iustitium*, a suspension of public business. Originally such a suspension is in case of calamity, but the word can also mean any suspension. Cicero and Livy use the term in the technical sense, Lucan in the looser sense.¹ One is mildly surprised to see a word an antiquarian would cherish used loosely, for, as D. W. T. Vessey says of the preface in general, “its *lexis* is its argument.”² We see an odd suggestion, then: one would only have recourse to this book in case of an emergency. And this is an unusual emergency in that it is one accompanied by rest and relaxation. But perhaps there is a sort of crisis afoot even if Gellius's idle, posthumously born children do not appreciate the fact. The crisis may well be the chronic and pressing need for erudition itself, especially when at rest.

There is something unsatisfying about such a beginning and its casual use of *iustitium*. Maybe what is lost would save us from what is found. But let's not count on such. The next sentences shift the point but resume and modify the core theme, namely, the occasion of and for such a text as the one we are reading. Gellius continues and amplifies (*autem*) by emphasizing less the order of his text than the use he has made of a preexisting order that was in fact no order at all. Gellius shifts from the possibility of relaxation and a suspension of business to the business that he himself took in hand when he took to writing the book that is to be read when . . .

1. See, then, Cicero, *Philippicae* 5.31; Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 4.26.12; and Lucan, *Bellum civile* 5.116. Gellius uses the term only one more time, in the first chapter of his last book. It is in a reported dialogue concerning the Laws of the Twelve Tables and used technically by Caecilius to gloss a detail of the status of debtors under the old laws. This passage will be discussed in a later chapter, but it is nevertheless an evocative association here and now: what is the economy of erudition?

2. Vessey 1994:1891. He also explores *iustitium* on this and the next page.

Well, when? The sons have one time of reading, Gellius another/others. Despite the genealogical connection to his readership, Gellius flags an important potential heterogeneity between author and audience.

Gellius made use of (*usi autem*) the aleatory order of his notes. When he wrote this book, he capitalized on stores that were not laid up carefully but instead scattered randomly. The process of acquiring the contents that would turn into the book was a disorderly order.³ When Gellius turns this nonorder into the order of the text, he says that this was a case of “making use of” this nonorder.⁴ But what kind of use might that be? Is simple transcription use? He is a copyist appropriating his own writings, but these writings are already both his own and not his own. The *Noctes* is the transcription of a transcription, the copy of a copy.

But Gellius is telling us about the order of the text, not meditating on “use.” The matter of the composition of the *Noctes Atticae* is presented as a simple function of the matter of the accumulation of the precursors to the *Noctes Atticae*. We are invited to imagine a one-to-one mapping. Gellius read. Gellius excerpted favorite passages. Gellius kept his ears open. Gellius wrote down things if they were worth remembering. There is already an interesting nondistinction between hearing and reading. Any book is potentially filled with things-to-be-excerpted. Any conversation is potentially filled with things-to-be-remembered. Any notebook—*commentarius*? are we quite there yet?—is filled with snippets of books and conversations. And as will be seen later, a conversation between men like Gellius is frequently akin to nothing more than the trotting out of snippets from a literary scrapbook.

The notes, then, had no order other than the order that the vicissitudes of Gellius’s intellectual life might have given them: one day this book, the next that; now this conversation, now that. The notes are a sort of biography, perhaps even an autobiography. Or they are at least the traces left behind by a life of letters. And yet they are disorderly: indistinct and promiscuous. Given the antiquarians’ love of precision, the imprecision of the notes themselves is a thing to be noted.⁵ Indiscriminate mingling,

3. But is Gellius really disorderly? The question has attracted its share of attention. See Marache 1967:xvii and his notes. Compare Henry 1994.

4. A case that is only at first blush converse: Ovid’s *Fasti* initially looks as if it is going to be a useful ordering of the calendar, but it then becomes a pointedly disorderly collection that often includes seemingly extraneous material. Meanwhile, the treatments are uneven and irregular, and the poem sees us through only half the year. The text thus enables/provokes nonlinear readings of itself. See Newlands 2000:172–74.

5. See, for example, *Noctes Atticae* 10.20.10 and 13.31.5. In the latter passage, part of the last chapter of its book, Gellius is sparring with a pretender to erudition, and he declares

promiscuity even, is likewise a potential problem. Even as Gellius admits that ancient usage itself had its wanton moments that were perhaps not all that wanton,⁶ good philology really ought to be able to sift out the sort of mistakes that confused opinion falls into. In a similar context Gellius recommends that we turn to Hadrian's speech in the senate on the Italians. There power, politics, and erudition converge on the question of what is, in fact, the difference between a *municipium* and a *colonia*.⁷ The philologist emperor speaks, and confusion ends.

And so Gellius laid up his motley stores, his *penus*. There will be a discussion of what *penus* itself means in the body of the *Noctes Atticae* (4.1). And we will look at that passage for the paradoxes of the definition of a definition. But for present purposes we can say yet again that the words are being carefully chosen: the word for a store of words is itself part of the store of words. An old logical conundrum: Should a book containing an index of all the books in a library contain itself as one of its entries? Is the set of all elements of a set a subset of the set?⁸ For Gellius the answer is clearly "yes."

We have a storehouse of literature, a *penus*. Actually, the notes are only "like" a storehouse; they are "actually" an aid to memory. Memory is here both the stores from which one draws and the thing benefited by such a gesture. But why remember? One needs to remember because "use" will arrive. If above Gellius "used" the random order of his notes, he is now in need of the memory that the notes support, the memory that meets up with and answers to the exigencies of the arrival of *usus* in the form of an occasion for action/reaction: a word or a thing is needed. And yet something else has slunk up in advance, creeping oblivion. Memory is gone; forgetfulness stands there in its place. In addition to memory, something else is also displaced. Displaced or replaced are the original books containing the original passages. Instead, we apparently only have to hand the collection of the *Noctes*, the collection collected. The logic of displacement produces an ironic analogy: forgetting is to memory as the *Noctes*

that imprecision betrays incomprehension: a verse you do not understand you will pronounce confusedly.

6. See *Noctes Atticae* 10.21.2: Cicero eschews *nouissime*, even though Cato (the Younger), Sallust, and other educated authors used it promiscuously. And Gellius defends Cato the Elder against Tiro by noting that Cato's speech was not ultrasmooth, polished, and sing-song (*distincte nimis atque compte atque modulate res acta est*), but instead like a pitched battle where one uses a variety of different tactics "promiscuously" (*Noctes Atticae* 6.3.52).

7. *Noctes Atticae* 16.13.4.

8. The converse is certainly the case: the null set, the set with no elements, is a subset of every set.

is to its originals. When oblivion seizes you, grab the *Noctes*, the *Book of Forgetfulness*. One can dip into the larder and draw off from it: *facile inde nobis inventu atque depromptu foret*.

The *Noctes* is something of a well-ordered storehouse despite its pointed disorder. Finding what is wanted and taking it out will be easy. And yet the contents are stored randomly. Gellius “used” the nonorder of the notes to make the book. But now when “use” arrives in the form of need, everything is going to be to hand.⁹ These two different uses of “use” yoke utility and necessity. They allow for a first glimpse of the movement between use-value and exchange-value in the political economy of antiquarianism.

The question of use has still further dimensions. Specifically, *usus* is one of the three major modes of antiquarian investigation: *usus*, *ratio*, and *auctoritas*—“(common) usage,” “(analogous) logic,” and “(authoritative) precedent”—are the three fonts of legitimacy from which the nectar of erudition is drawn and to which we will repeatedly return throughout this study. As an antiquarian, Gellius is axiomatically a man obsessed with authoritative *usus*: how is this word used? by whom? where? But these questions are not neutral positivities. There is a further question already hinted at here and much in evidence throughout the *Noctes Atticae*: can you trot out the citations to demonstrate your knowledge of *auctoritas*? That is, the practice of antiquarianism entails the collection of *usus*-as-citations to the end of citing these citations. The practice—*consuetudo*, a quasi synonym for *usus* in technical discussions—of philology is the authoritative use of *usus*. The logic of the institution (*ratio philologiae*), then, is an involuted thing: it entails the authoritative use of a common stock of precedents in a reasonable manner.

Antiquarian “use” of “use,” then, means that the facts of a word are not so much abstract facts as they are facts one will need to have to hand, when the need should—and it will—arrive (*quando usus uenisset*). The practice of antiquarianism as a species of *usus* thus relies on a specific relationship to *usus* as precedent that ultimately reflects back on the contents of the objects of antiquarian knowledge itself. The objects produced cannot be dissociated from the relations of production that determine the construction of knowledge. The study of “usage” is in practice an obsession with obscure usage as a simultaneous fact and artifact of the process of archiving itself. The common stock and trade is the uncommon. The storehouse is filled with obscurities that are the clearly stamped coin of the philological realm.

9. No, we don’t yet know that Gellius has in fact inserted a table of contents. But even if we did, I assure you that it is nevertheless cumbersome.

Of course, inheriting Cato's words is not the same as inheriting his name and estate: a linguistic patrimony is not an actual patrimony. Nevertheless, Gellius would hand down to his children a legacy of others' precious words that had become his own. And we too are heirs to the not-manor not-born.¹⁰ In fact, we are always predisposed to "use" Gellius as he used his sources and hence to meet our exigencies as he met his. In short, we are inclined to seize the contents of *Noctes* for ourselves even as a forgetfulness of Gellius seizes us. Quoth Proudhon: "La propriété, c'est le vol." Gellius, though, would prefer that we not forget our own father, that we receive this stolen legacy legitimately rather than plunder anew.

The use made of the disorder of his notes in fact reveals a guarantee of the unique and precious as against the possible banality of Gellius's knowledge. It defends the notion that only Gellius could have accumulated this *penus*. Everything is on loan, but as a sum of things, it is uniquely his. And only Gellius's legitimate heirs can receive it as a legacy. Fortunately the rules of succession in Gellius allow for us too to inherit legitimately his linguistic patrimony and to make another's precious words our own.

And his trove is a precious one. It is as precious as Gellius himself to the extent that it is an index to and of Gellius *ipsissimus*. Despite our likely sentiments to the contrary, Gellius does not think himself a pedant and a peddler of the inconsequential. He in fact criticizes pedantry and the accumulation of worthless knowledge.¹¹ Random though it may be, his knowledge is nevertheless somehow not a simple heap of facts possessing no real value and serving no real end. Instead, these facts have a use-value that is identical to their exchange-value. And many of the items in the *Noctes* have already proved their value in philological exchanges.

The economy of verbal exchange insists that every word is a precious heirloom, and not a mere signifier that testifies only to the expropriation of another's labor to one's own profit.¹² In short, a book that contained a list of rare words to be memorized by anyone who would like to become educated and cultured would be anathema to Gellius. Culture is lived in cultured exchanges. Culture is acquired by reading and annotating. Culture is an immersion in the world of books.¹³

10. "For fathers to claim that they were writing for the benefit of their sons was itself a *topos*" (Vessey 1994:1981). Compare Kaster 1988:67n142.

11. See Schmitz 1997:146–52 for an account of the sociology of the Atticists' repudiation of pedantry during the Second Sophistic: ἀττικίζειν is not υπεραττικίζειν.

12. See Bourdieu 1991:55 on the "profit of distinction" in such exchanges. Compare Schmitz 1997:90 on how this analysis can be applied to the ancient world.

13. Anderson 1993:85: "Sophists, then, lived in a world of books—or never too far away from it. And society expected them to be living on the closest terms with their authors, as

Facta igitur est in his quoque commentariis eadem rerum disparilitas, quae fuit in illis annotationibus pristinis, quas breuiter et indigeste et incondite <ex> auditionibus lectionibusque uariis feceramus. Sed quoniam longinquis per hiemem noctibus in agro, sicuti dixi, terrae Atticae commentationes hasce ludere ac facere exorsi sumus, idcirco eas inscripsimus *noctium* esse *Atticarum* nihil imitati festiuitates inscriptionum, quas plerique alii utriusque linguae scriptores in id genus libris fecerunt. Nam quia uariam et miscellam et quasi confusaneam doctrinam conquisiuerant, eo titulos quoque ad eam sententiam exquisitissimos indiderunt. Namque alii *Musarum* inscripserunt, alii *siluarum*, ille πέπλον, hic Ἀμαλθείας κέρας, alius κηρία, partim λειμώνας, quidam *lectionis suae*, alius *antiquarum lectionum* atque alius ἀνθρῶν et item alius εὐρημάτων. Sunt etiam, qui λύχνους inscripserint, sunt item, qui στρωματεῖς, sunt adeo, qui πανδέκτας et Ἑλικῶνα et προβλήματα et ἐγχειρίδια et παραξιφίδας. Est qui *memoriales* titulum fecerit, est qui πραγματικά et πάρεργα et διδασκαλικά, est item qui *historiae naturalis*, est <qui> παντοδαπῆς ἱστορίας, est praeterea qui *pratum*, est itidem qui πάγκαρπον, est qui τόπων scripserit; sunt item multi, qui *coniectanea*, neque item non sunt, qui indices libris suis fecerint aut *epistularum moralium* aut *epistolicarum quaestionum* aut *confusarum* et quaedam alia inscripta nimis lepida multasque prorsum concinnitates redolentia. Nos uero, ut captus noster est, incuriose et inmediate ac prope etiam subrustice ex ipso loco ac tempore hibernarum uigiliarum *Atticas noctes* inscripsimus tantum ceteris omnibus in ipsius quoque inscriptionis laude cedentes, quantum cessimus in cura et elegantia scriptionis.

Therefore, in the case of these commentaries of mine as well an identical disparity of material was the result: it matches the disparity originally present in those annotations that I briefly and indiscriminately and confusedly made from what I variously heard and read. But since, as I mentioned earlier, I began to sport with and to produce these reflections-cum-textbooks (*commentationes*) in the Athenian countryside during the winter, for this reason I have set the title upon them of *Attic Nights*. I have not in the least imitated those festive and witty titles that most other Greek and Roman authors invent for works of this stamp. They have collected a various, miscellaneous, and, as it were, turbid (*confusaneam*) body of

guardians of a heritage. But this was a heritage in use, which sophists could continually transform, and by which they themselves could be transformed in turn.” The “performances of knowledge” on the part of the public speakers of the Second Sophistic ought to be compared with those found within and embodied by Gellius’s *Noctes*.

learning,¹⁴ and for this very reason they have set upon their works the most recherché titles. And so some title their text *Muses*, others *Forests*, this one *The Robe*, that one *The Horn of Plenty*, another *Honeycombs*, a number *Meadows*, some *His Reading*, another *Ancient Readings*, and still another *Blossoming*, and yet another, *Discoveries*. There are even those who have titled their works *Lucubrations*, and so too *Patchworks*, and further those who picked *All-Receivers* and *Mt. Helicon* and *Problems* and *Handbooks/Daggers* and *Dirks*. There is even a guy who produced the title *Records*, and one who used *To Do* and *To Do on the Side* and *To Teach*. There is also the one who used *Natural History*, and he who chose *History of Every Stamp*. Additionally, there is the author of *The Field*, and someone has *Bountiful Harvest*, and the man who wrote *Commonplaces*. Likewise there are many who use *Tossed Together*. Nor is there a shortage of men with telling titles for their books like *Moral Letters* or *Epistolary Investigations* or *Miscellaneous Letters* (*Confusae*) that are too urbane by a half and moreover reek with a multitude of clever conceits. But I have kept within my means and have chosen my title *Attic Nights* carelessly, without deliberation, and almost crudely. It is the product of the place and the time of my winter exertions. And I have given every bit as much ground to the others in the question of the glory of my title (*inscriptio*) as I have yielded to them in the care and polish of my prose (*scriptio*).

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 3–10

Gellius continues his discussion of the content of the *Noctes*, but this then blends into the question of the label to be affixed to this content. Gellius again emphasizes the verb, the process of production. “There was produced . . .” What? A second item of emphasis in its clause, the last word comes as a punch line: *disparilitas*, disparity. “The resulting whole was divergence.” Better still, *disparilitas* is itself a rare word. Expect the unexpected, this is the regular feature of this irregular text. Difference is both the “dark precursor” and the radiant effect of this disparate text, which forms a not-whole whole.¹⁵ QWERTY is not itself a word, but this disparate and meaningless agglomeration of word elements nevertheless can be localized on the surface of a specific mechanism with which all possible English words and phrases can be generated. The disparate chapters of Gellius spell out a similarly pre-sensical wor(l)d that can readily be

14. *Confusaneam* appears only here in Latin literature. It is an *exquisitissimum uerbum* to choose when deriding the preciousness of others. The core metaphor is of mingled liquids.

15. See Deleuze 1994:119–21.

mistaken for a non-sensical one.¹⁶ From this perspective Gellius is less an author than a typist. How is one to read him, then? “[W]hat matters is the divergence of series, the decentering of circles, ‘monstrosity.’ The totality of circles and series is thus a formless *ungrounded* chaos which has no law other than its own repetition, its own reproduction in the development of that which diverges and decenters. We know how these conditions are already satisfied in such works as Mallarmé’s *Book* or Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*: these are by nature problematic works.”¹⁷ By typing rather than authoring, Gellius renders visible the problematic status of antiquarian knowledge. Amid the problems that this knowledge generates qua problems are questions of repetition, divergence, and decentering even as so much of the talk centers on orthodoxy, authority, and legitimacy. And importantly, it is the problematic figure of the author, of Aulus Gellius, who himself lends a sense of grounded order to the *Noctes*.

I do not wish to get too far ahead of myself here. It is too soon to think through the philosophy of difference hinted at by antiquarianism without first passing through the institution of antiquarianism. The *Noctes* ought not to be reduced to its own disparity as if its essence were in fact a sort of present absence-of-an-essence. Gellius is more than a monkey hammering away at a keyboard: q . . . w . . . e . . . r . . . t . . . y . . . If we would wish to look more closely into the ordering principles of the *Noctes*, Gellius recommends that we go back to Gellius himself as a concrete individual. As he experienced knowledge, so did he transcribe it.¹⁸ The author matters: this author writes that he matters precisely as a concrete individual and not as a mere vehicle for disparity. In fact, the disparity points to a significant unity: the life of Gellius.

This life, though, is not a single, tidy entity. Gellius consumes and he produces. He reads, he writes; he eats, he sires. For Gellius consumption is production. And antiquarianism as a practice more generally, as an *usus*, entails the production of consumption, the forging of the disposition that is hungry for books but no sooner digests them than it (re)produces yet another book.¹⁹

16. See Deleuze 1988:12 on AZERT, the letters of a French typewriter. Compare Deleuze 1988:78–79.

17. Deleuze 1994:69, original emphasis.

18. Vessey 1994:1982–93 surveys the various reactions to Gellius’s claim that his order is “fortuitous.” Few have been inclined to take this as anything but a literary conceit.

19. See Henry 1994:1926 on the alimentary metaphors in Gellius: “Knowledge is bodily. Faulty knowledge can be likened to faulty eating habits.” Compare Henry 1994:1928. See also Foucault 1997c:213. Wilkins 2000 explores the alimentary metaphor in Athenaeus’s feast of learning.

The political economy of *disparilitas* is only the beginning of our troubles, though. The noun is used to capture a feature of a genre of text that itself is traditionally disparate. What, then, is a “commentary,” a *commentarius*?²⁰ It is a notebook or a private journal. It is a public record book kept by a magistrate. It is a textbook or even a commentary on a text. Gellius’s commentaries span all these functions. His private journal is offered as a public record. It records public disputes about the fruits of other private readings. It also records the opinions of legal experts on questions of law. Similarly, it is a textbook for the study of how to study and how to study textbooks even. It is a commentary on texts and a commentary on commentaries as well. Cicero remarked of Caesar’s historical *commentarii* that one would be unwise to try to polish them into a proper history—the traditional destiny of items of the subgenre that Caesar had nevertheless transformed into a genre. And this metamorphosis is what Cicero sees: the subliterate had become literary. There was a nasty surprise awaiting the one who would try to digest, distinguish, and make recondite such a text: unfinished, it was nevertheless done to perfection. One ought treat Gellius’s *commentarii* with similar circumspection. Gellius himself is an assiduous if unusual reader of Caesar.

OK, Gellius has written a “commentary,” whatever that might be. Maybe the title of Gellius’s book will help us to specify further. Maybe the title will allow us to set a single, authoritative conclusion upon our own commentary on the commentary. But the matter of the title does precisely the opposite: the secret of the title is that there is no secret. It is chosen at random. It gestures to a place and a time, but in a seemingly haphazard manner. If we believe that, though, we would be inclined to take the rest of this paragraph at face value. Though Gellius’s preface has at times been read in this manner, a closer look swiftly reveals the inadequacy of the naive approach to this praise of naiveté.

Gellius smirks cruelly at the titles of other books of miscellanies. Their authors think that they are very clever indeed. They pick these outlandish titles. None of them can really be translated; they are all suffused with secondary meanings and learned allusions. But not Gellius’s title? Is *Noctes Atticae* not itself a sort of merger of *λύχνους* and *ἑλικῶνα*? If *Confusae* is a bad title, why should we not raise an eyebrow at Gellius’s own posturing about the “confused” (*confusaneam*) quality of his own material?

In fact, the more one lucubrates on the question of Gellius’s title and the titles of others, it becomes clear that all those titles would suit Gellius’s

20. Compare Kaster 1995:101. See Riggsby 2006 for a careful review of this protean genre.

work.²¹ And upon reading the contents, the sensation only grows stronger. To the extent that there is a problem, though, it is that in picking one of those titles he might have to exclude the others: he has written both a *Patchwork* and a *Horn of Plenty*. He has written up *Problems*, and he has stabbed more than a few *Daggers* through the hearts of posturing academics. His *Side-Work* is also his *Teaching Text*. His *Reading* is also his *Ancient Readings*.²²

Unfamiliar as the notion may be relative to antiquarianism, we seem to be in the presence of the very sort of “Alexandrian footnote” that poets use when imitating commentators.²³ But now it is the world of commentary itself that comes across as poetic. By explicitly bringing up the question of the title, Gellius ensures the conjoint having and eating of the *Honeycomb* and the *Bountiful Harvest*. That is, he can give all these titles to his work and none of them to it. Gellius consumes all the other books on books, but he simultaneously preserves them within his own book. Others’ collections are collected within Gellius’s collection of titles of collections.²⁴ And even as he chuckles at the men whose titles are indices, the laugh comes at our expense if we do not crack a smile in a few pages when we begin to read there the index to the *Noctes Atticae*.

Some more problems: προβλήματα is a funny title to critique. Gellius loves Aristotle. But maybe there are other texts he has in mind: *problemata* had long since become the designation for certain classroom exercises. See Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 4.5.²⁵ Similarly, *Epistulae morales* makes one think of Seneca. Seneca is more an intellectual competitor in the broadest sense than a posturing anthologizer. But Gellius does critique Seneca, even if that criticism is itself little beyond an enumeration of trite objections (*Noctes Atticae* 12.2). *Historia naturalis*: Pliny is a rival, but in his case the title is neither posturing nor deceptive nor too clever. In all three cases one readily imagines that Gellius has seen even more works with these same titles. For example, we learn in the course of his *Apology* that

21. Marache 1967:xi–xii sees in *Noctes* itself a translation for “élucubrations.” But he does not examine the relationship between the title and the preface in general.

22. See Marache 1967:xxiv on the relationship between Gellius’s preface and the preface to Pliny’s *Natural History*, which itself accumulates learned titles. Pliny’s book of bookishness at times seems to go too far for Gellius. Meanwhile, Pliny’s title is but one title in a long list of titles adduced by Gellius. Gellius inscribes a sort of tense rivalry between their two works. These issues will be fleshed out more in the discussion of *dramatis personae* later.

23. For “Alexandrian footnote,” see Hinds 1997:2, who picks up and expands Ross 1975.

24. See Sandy 1997:60–64 on the pervasive “bibliomania” of Gellius’s age. See also Sandy 1997:73–84 on compendia and miscellanies.

25. See also Preston 2001:95 on Plutarch’s *Roman Questions* and *Greek Questions* as akin to *Problemata*.

Apuleius has been writing a *Naturales quaestiones*.²⁶ Gellius both himself engages the great and simultaneously competes with the competitors of the great, men who had given their works such already famous titles.

Gellius is playing an elaborate game. Even as Gellius ends this section by declaring his own artlessness, he produces a jingle with *scriptionis*, the last word of the passage, picking up on *inscriptionis* in the preceding clause. In fact, the somewhat mechanical *scriptio*, “writing down,” has had to have its meaning stretched in order for the sense of the phrase to work while satisfying the exigencies of the rhyme.

The collection of titles gestures to another issue that bears upon the reading of the whole. Gellius is very much a reader of readings. Though he clearly engages in research on primary texts—to put things in our own idiom—he has a passion for reading collections and commentaries. Indeed, one might say that so-called secondary literature has a way of becoming primary literature for him.²⁷ His goal is less, then, to become the next Ennius or the next Cato, but to become instead the next great Ennius scholar. Rivalry, emulation, and “republican longing” as one sees them in other Latin authors are only weakly felt against a more immediate backdrop of dirks and daggers brandished by the bookish set. If the secondary has become primary in its own right, though, what then does this say about the desire to study the past more generally?

There is a slide from *res publica* to *res Romana*:²⁸ the antiquarian subject shifts from a relationship to the political thing to the (merely) cultural thing. Politics subsists largely within the disavowed politics of the consumption of these cultural objects. And these same objects are largely a collection of republican fossils, long-dead specimens lovingly arrayed in a display case. Antiquarianism does not have to be (seen) this way: Cicero praises Varro for dis-alienating Romans from themselves with his specifically Roman antiquarian researches. “We were tourists in our own city and wandered like so many visitors. Your books escorted us home, as it were, so that we could finally recognize who we were and where we were.”²⁹ Gellius

26. Apuleius, *Apologia* 36.8.

27. Sharrock 2000:5: “It is perhaps particularly important for classicists to be self-aware about [dividing and rejoining in the act of reading], since our intellectual training, both personally and historically, has been deeply imbued with the commentary. This genre, more than any other, encourages fragmentation and schematization of texts. We have learned to read Latin and Greek texts in lemmata, in chunks.”

28. Steinmetz 1982:381–84.

29. *nam nos in nostra urbe peregrinantis errantisque tamquam hospites tui libri quasi domum deduxerunt, ut possemus aliquando qui et ubi essemus agnoscere* (Cicero, *Academica* 1.9).

is eager to repeat the basic gesture, but he is far less likely to escort us to a home that abuts the forum.³⁰ Instead, despite his gestures toward the *negotium* of public life, Gellius will in the end invite us to finally recognize who we are and where we are: readers in our second home, the library.

Sed ne consilium quidem in excerpendis notandisque rebus idem mihi, quod plerisque illis, fuit. Namque illi omnes et eorum maxime Graeci multa et uaria lectitantes, in quas res cumque inciderant, “alba” ut dicitur “linea” sine cura discriminis solam copiam sectati conuerrebant, quibus in legendis ante animus senio ac taedio languebit, quam unum alterumue repperit, quod sit aut uoluptati legere aut cultui legisse aut usui meminisse. Ego uero, cum illud Ephesii uiri summe nobilis uerbum cordi haberem, quod profecto ita est: πολυμαθὴν νόον οὐ διδάσκει, ipse quidem uoluendis transeundisque multis admodum uoluminibus per omnia semper negotiorum interualla, in quibus furari otium potui, exercitus defessusque sum, sed modica ex his eaque sola accepi, quae aut ingenia prompta expeditaque ad honestae eruditionis cupidinem utiliumque artium contemplationem celeri facilique compendio ducerent aut homines aliis iam uitae negotiis occupatos a turpi certe agrestique rerum atque uerborum imperitiis uindicarent.

However, when I was excerpting and annotating, my plan was by no means the same course followed by most of them. All of them—and especially the Greeks, who habitually read many and varied texts—whenever they lighted upon any old material, they would sweep it together “by the white line,” as they say,³¹ in an exclusive pursuit of quantity itself at the utter expense of discernment. If you read them, your mind will grow weak from old age and ennui before you find one or two things that are conducive to pleasure while reading, culture once read, or advantage (*usus*) when remembered. For my part I keep close to my breast that maxim of the most utterly noble man of Ephesus that goes just so: “Vast learning teaches not the mind.” In fact, I myself have unrolled and made my way through a considerable number of volumes every time I had a break in my affairs and was then able to pilfer a bit of ease. The task has given me a real workout even as it

30. Varro’s move is not uncomplicated either. It can and should be read as an intervention and a trope of mastery. See Feeney 1998:140.

31. Do they say this? The metaphor looks mixed. *Alba linea*: a white line drawn on a white object and hence all but invisible. Compare Plutarch, *De garrulitate* 513F. But “sweeping together” and drawing a line are odd yoke mates. *Alba linea* then looks quasi-adverbial: “indiscriminately.” As always, there is an irony in glossing and cross-referencing Gellius: one is only playing his game.

has exhausted me. I have taken on, though, only a moderate number of items and only two sorts of them: those that might provide a swift and easy shortcut for wits that are ready and unencumbered, ones whereby they can be led to the desire for gentlemanly erudition and the contemplation of the useful arts and, next, those that would defend men who are already busy with other human affairs from a truly base and rustic ignorance of words and things.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 11–12

Gellius's text is not, despite appearances to the contrary, a sinkhole of learning, not some dustbin piled high with literary clippings and grammatical scraps. Other people write that kind of book, especially Greeks. They read indiscriminately, and they write in the same manner. Reading the transcriptions of such readings is a complete waste of time. In contrast, this book makes a threefold claim on our attention: it will give us pleasure here and now; it will cultivate our minds; we will acquire a store of useful items that we can draw out from our memory. That is, the idiom of this passage about what it means to read a book of miscellanies invokes the same set of issues presented in the "opening" of the preface. Gellius originally experienced the knowledge he has set down with a certain kind of ear and eye, and we who read him are expected to possess organs with the same sorts of needs/uses.

As I mentioned earlier, Gellius seems to be very much a reader of readings and perhaps more so than a consumer of old texts in their own right. In fact, when he does get his hands on an ancient volume, it would seem that he and men of his stamp are generally more concerned with mining it for memorable antiquarian data than they are with "literary appreciation" as we might use the phrase.³² It is, then, easy to imagine that one Gellian "use" of Gellius's own text would in fact dispense largely with whatever immediate pleasures it might offer and aim instead toward acquiring "culture" and laying up a store of "facts." There is a certain perverse pleasure to be taken in the hoarding of shiny things. The book of excerpts, then, is perhaps destined to be excerpted. A fate that it has certainly met: Gellius is routinely sliced up and repackaged even to the point of his own

32. *Noctes Atticae* 17.2 is probably the most explicit chapter on reading as mining. The method is implicitly present throughout Gellius. Moments of literary appreciation such as the famous comparison of Menander and Caecilius (*Noctes Atticae* 2.23) are relatively rare. The latter passage can be described more as an attempt to establish a pedigree for Gellius's own cultured ear than as a genuine appreciation of literature. See, though, Jenson 1997:365–68 for a review of the ways in which the preface is programmatic for Gellius's theory of literary criticism.

evanescence. His spirit lives on, though. To remember and to use a piece of antiquarian knowledge found within the *Noctes* redeems Gellius even if it pushes him to one side.

But could we be more specific about the readers? Is it too cavalier to just say “us”? Maybe, that is, we should take Gellius at his word here even if doing so above was a bit unwise. Specifically, then, this book is supposed to be for people who are too busy to read the greats themselves. It is *Rome for Dummies* or *Ennius in Fifteen Minutes* or *Cultural Literacy*, by Aulus Gellius (as told to E. D. Hirsch). And yet even as Gellius claims something like this, there remains more to the story. First, Gellius himself took time off from his affairs in order to write this for us. It is hard, then, to imagine that anyone could really be so busy that he would not himself be expected to be able not just to read Gellius but to read like Gellius. Certainly busy Gellius has been busy reading men like Gellius in his own off hours. Are we more uncouth if we don’t read Gellius’s book or if we don’t appreciate that there is more to reading it than meets the eye? Gellius’s literary shortcut is very circuitous in its logic.

The pleasure of and in learning that is being engendered and given birth to (*partae*) is a “shortcut” (*compendium*) only in the sense that an individual excerpt is an adumbration. The fact of the matter is that the full course of a life well spent involves contemplating knowledge and falling in love with it more broadly. However, even if there is a sense that life might be a journey of learning, for the antiquarian a journey of a thousand miles begins with just one shortcut. The whole is a sum of a myriad minute parts.

The usefulness of the useful arts partially consists in the cultural cachet associated with being able to cite examples of the useful arts. That is, they possess a derivative utility as items of cultural acquisition, and this secondary use become primary can be set against their innate usefulness. The antiquarians are pointillists, and the portrait of culture they produce is not done according to competing rules of the brush or palette. If a philosopher, for example, paints only with logic, ethics, and natural science in carefully blended strokes, the antiquarian daubs on his canvas now here and now there with first some philosophy, then some grammar, next a funny anecdote, and finally a point of law.

There is a strong sense that we can read Gellius only retroactively, that is, that we must already be his grown sons and well advanced along the road before we can appreciate the logic of the shortcut. Certainly, we won’t know who the famous Ephesian is unless we have at least taken enough time to bone up on our lives of the philosophers and to associate Heraclitus

with that city. We need at least a smattering of πολυμαθίη as a prelude to understanding the inadequacies of πολυμαθίη itself. The same perhaps goes for appreciating the “white line, as it is said.” Said by whom? In what context? The savoir-faire of a veteran reference librarian has insinuated itself into the structure of distinction and the aristocracy of taste.³³ The more urbane and aristocratic (*urbanus* and *honestus*) we are, the better we can appreciate the charming speciousness of the arguments about rusticity and humble birth. Mastery of the archives has become a sort of surrogate for being well born and well read.

A potential danger, then: a compendium can outweigh the very profits of distinction that make it up. The glitter might o’erwhelm the very gold. Is it more desirable to be Cato or to have read and memorized his complete works? Recall, however, the anticlimax and the nonevent when *homo economicus* went off the gold standard. The nations only grew wealthier for it. Furthermore, in a sign of the reality of the virtual, one today speaks excitedly of the information age and the information economy. Hoarding bullion is for kooks. A trove of golden lines, though, bespeaks a man of means.

Quod erunt autem in his commentariis pauca quaedam scrupulosa et anxia uel ex grammatica uel ex dialectica uel etiam ex geometrica, quodque erunt item paucula remotiora super augurio iure et pontificio, non oportet ea defugere quasi aut cognitu non utilia aut perceptu difficilia. Non enim fecimus altos nimis et obscuros in his rebus quaestionum sinus, sed primitias quasdam et quasi libamenta ingenuarum artium dedimus, quae uirum ciuilitate eruditum neque audisse umquam neque attigisse, si non inutile, at quidem certe indecorum est. Ab his igitur, si cui forte nonnumquam tempus uoluptasque erit lucubrationunculas istas cognoscere, petutum impetratumque uolumus, ut in legendo, quae pridem scierint, non aspernentur quasi nota inuolgataque.

Now as to the fact that there will be in these commentaries a small number of extremely meticulous and detailed items derived from literary studies, logic, or mathematics, and as there will be as well a handful of more *recherché* entries concerning augury and the priestly colleges, it would be inappropriate to run in flight from these as if they are not useful to know, as if they are hard to understand. I have not produced excessively deep and obscure undulations of inquiry in these matters. Instead, I have offered a

33. On the last, see Bourdieu 1984.

number of first fruits and libations of the well-bred arts. The man who has the buff and polish of a citizen, if he has neither heard of nor touched upon these matters, well, that may not be a harmful situation (*inutile*), but it certainly is an unseemly one. Therefore, for those who happen to have the time and inclination (*uoluptas*) to become familiar with these little lucubrations of mine, I would ask of such readers a favor: as they read, may they not scorn items they already know as if they are well known and commonplace.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 13–14

Two sorts of readers are conjured: the one who knows too little and the one who knows too much; the anti-antiquarian and the already-antiquarian. The book is going to be filled with anxiety-inducing, excessively detailed details that will be like so many pebbles in our sandals as we make our journey through the text. But this image is already a mistranslation of *anxia* and *scrupulosa*. Instead, we take their more remote senses as the primary ones: careful, meticulous. Let scholarly rigor not cause us pain. Certain fields lend themselves to a sort of intellectual excess: “grammar”—literary studies with an emphasis on the minutiae of words rather than readings of the whole—philosophical logic, and geometry. In actual fact, though, the scruples of the reader of the *Noctes* will be provoked more by the first sort of learning than by the other two. Geometry comes in a distant third. Perhaps Gellius is giving an inverse series according to a geometric equation. And then there are the religious items. They are far more common than the math or the philosophy but still a somewhat distant second to the “grammar.” It is hard to do the math with any great precision here, though. Nevertheless, Gellius promises that his proportions are just right.

Gellius may have worn himself out acquiring this knowledge, but we are not to worry at this. From his bountiful bosom there shall pour forth delicacies of knowledge that are neither folded away too deeply nor hidden in too great darkness. That is, there is more than one way to take the sense of *sinus* here. One can perhaps imagine a bountiful Amalthea or some other feminine figure. In short, we can think again of the roads taken-but-not-taken when it came time to title this book of books: the *πέπλος* will not entangle us in its folds; it gives back rather than seizing and hiding away. The text, like Hades, is all-receiving (*πανδέκτης*), yes, but more importantly it is all-giving of all sorts of fruit (*πάγκαρπον*). And it gives piously: first fruits and libations are proffered. Moreover, these offerings are not so much poured out to the gods as they are made to the men who would know how to receive them. And if they are properly taken up, they do not just

exemplify the well-born arts, but they make the readers into more gentlemanly souls. Gellius: a bountiful, divine, and parental figure.

Gellius's first hypothetical bad reader demands the useful in a pragmatic sense. But this same reader is not necessarily inclined to put forth an effort to know things even if they really are useful. A busy man might think himself too busy for all of this. But Gellius himself was both busy in public life and busy in his study when he was at ease. He offers his sons and others the fruits of these labors that they might be induced to become not just better men in private but so too "publicly erudite" (*ciuilitur eruditum*). In fact, the fruits of the *Noctes* are merely first fruits, and the libations just pour off a taste of the wine. Our appetites are being whetted. To consume this book is only to begin an epic adventure that will see us from one end of the library and back again. And in the end we can be expected to have amassed our own scrapbooks as a memoir of this motley history (παντοδαπῆς ἱστορίας).³⁴

One should not be seen in broad daylight on the streets of Rome without some of this nocturnal, Attic knowledge. The not-so-little little lucubrations (*lucubratiunculas*/λύχνους) form an unproblematic bulwark of logic (προβλήματα) and other arts designed to ensure that a man cuts a good figure in public. The use of *inutile* in this passage is striking. "While it is not a bad thing (*inutile*) for a man not to know this material, it is unseemly." A remote sense of *inutile* has been summoned to meet present exigencies: it is not useful for *inutile* to mean "not useful" in this clause. Need arrived, *usus uenit*: I had to call upon my erudition to find a meaning of *inutile* that would allow for a meaningful translation of Gellius's sentiment. He is not saying that it is "not unuseful" to know these things. In fact, he is making exactly the point of the litotes, namely, that it is indeed useful to know these things. Accordingly, the sentence makes its own point on more than one level: the first half of the antithesis is not in fact antithetical but instead embodies the thesis itself, namely, one does well to know the details of words. But it is precisely when we know such details that we are able to "correct" the translation of *inutile* to "harmful." In a grammatical sleight of hand, a dialectical *petitio principii* has become the foundation of our conviction that this civics lesson in the sociology of

34. This specific item on the list of not-titles is somewhat unexpected: Παντοδαπὴ Ἱστορία is the title of a work by Favorinus, one of Gellius's heroes. We are quietly informed that there might be something incomplete about Favorinus's clever book and clever person. He is but one of the many who will be needed. The discussion of 14.6 later will reveal another apparent critique of Favorinus. See Whitmarsh 2001:115 on Lucian's implied critique of Favorinus himself as a hybrid monstrosity. Whitmarsh 2001:167–68 shows this hybridity in a more positive and productive light.

erudition will require a bit of perspicacity. Thus, there are in fact some tricky folds to this robe of knowledge. Even as the first fruits are plentiful, the horn remains filled with plenty more where they came from. The text is not a mere sidelight (πάρεργον), but it is truly practical (πραγματικόν) and educative (διδασκαλικόν).

Clearly the lazy man and/or the antigrammarian is going to have a rough time of it reading Gellius. Gellius's address to the other imagined party is not surprisingly much fuller, and I have only begun its translation. If the already erudite man has the time to read this book and if it gives him pleasure, then Gellius asks something. He asks for something that has implicitly already been granted though: such a reader is asked that he not find that he does not have time and that he does not take any pleasure in the text. The reader who is already disposed to consume knowledge just as Gellius asks that we consume his knowledge might in practice find that he or she is not so much making the acquaintance of Gellius's book (*cognoscere*), but instead getting to know all over again the too-well known. The book might not be precious, rare, and well bred, then, but instead everyman's knowledge and a heap of vulgarities.

The collector of knowledge ideally collects the rare and the precious. His collection is prized as an assembly of exotic postcards and snapshots from far-flung travels in the archives. To some, though, the journeys may appear to have been too far-flung, to others, all too common: been there, done that. In conjuring away the objections of the first set of people, Gellius also makes a preliminary defense and strikes a proleptic blow with his dagger (προβλήματα and ἔγχειρίδια/παραξίφιδας) at the second sort.³⁵ These *Attic Nights* are not necessarily meant for the most specialized of the specialists. The sense of the "utility" of knowledge, though, is swiftly blurring into a portrait of the pleasures of knowledge and the cultural distinction to which a knower of this-and-not-that might lay claim. The sociology of knowledge is crowding to the fore, and here the use-value of a fact subsists solely as a function of a contested field wherein one constantly fights about what a man knows and how he knows it.

Nam ecquid tam remotum in litteris est, quin id tamen complusculi sciant?
et satis hoc blandum est non esse haec neque in scholis decantata neque in

35. Meanwhile, if we ourselves imagine Epictetus's *Handbook*, his Ἐγχειρίδιον, to be one of the texts Gellius specifically has in mind as a competing text, then we see that a philological miscellany wards off, stabs, and displaces an ecumenical introduction to Stoicism. Epictetus is cited more than once in the *Noctes*. But Gellius is again being pointedly vague: he only mentions books named *Handbook*, not a specific *Handbook*.

commentariis protrita. Quae porro noua sibi ignotaque offenderint, aequum esse puto, ut sine uano obtrektatu considerent, an minutae istae admonitiones et paucillulae nequaquam tamen sint uel ad alendum studium uestrae uel ad oblectandum fouendumque animum frigidae, sed eius seminis generisque sint, ex quo facile adolescant aut ingenia hominum uegetiora aut memoria adminiculatio aut oratio sollertior aut sermo incorruptior aut delectatio in otio atque in ludo liberalior. Quae autem parum plana uidebuntur aut minus plena instructaque, petimus, inquam, ut ea non docendi magis quam admonendi gratia scripta existiment et quasi demonstratione uestigiorum contenti persequantur ea post, si libebit, uel libris repertis uel magistris. Quae uero putauerint reprehendenda, his, si audebunt, succenseant, unde ea nos accepimus; sed enim, quae aliter apud alium scripta legerint, ne iam statim temere obstrepant, sed et rationes rerum et auctoritates hominum pensitent, quos illi quosque nos secuti sumus.

I ask you, is there any piece of literature so obscure that a fair number of people nevertheless don't know it? And this seems a winning enough recommendation: these items of mine are neither chanted by choirs of schoolboys nor are they ground into dust in handbooks (*commentariis*). Moreover, whatever items people should find that are new to them, I think it fair to ask that they take a look at them, setting to one side any idle disparagement: Are these miniscule and contemptibly meager promptings nevertheless either fruitless when it comes to nourishing learning or frigid when it comes to delighting and fostering the spirit? Or are they of that seed and stock from which men's wits mature so as to be more hale, their memory more serviceable, their rhetoric more clever, their speech more pure, and their pleasure more liberal both when at ease and when at play? In the case, though, of material that will appear insufficiently clear or not fully and properly arranged, I ask, I say, that readers assume that these things are written less for the purpose of instruction than as promptings. They ought to be satisfied, as it were, that the way has been pointed out to them. If they wish, they can follow through on these things when they have found the right books or teachers. But in those instances where they think items deserve reproach, let them, if they dare, vent their anger on the sources of my citations. In the case of passages that are read otherwise in different authors, let my readers please not immediately kick up a fuss. Instead, let them weigh both the reasoning behind the arguments and the value of the authorities that those other writers followed and the ones that I have followed.

If a book exists, then it has been read by many men. We are circulating not the utterly unknown but instead the already known.³⁶ The knowledge will be relatively scarce but not hopelessly obscure. It will not be the stuff every schoolboy knows. It will not be the familiar matter that every scholarly work belabors. One pauses: the *commentarii* that are being maligned are apparently very much distinct from the *commentarii* that are currently being penned. Somebody else's commentaries are dreadfully trite; Gellius's are usefully recondite. Or so he hopes.³⁷

And our narrator does come across as anxious. He is concerned to guide our reception of both the unknown and the already known. He imagines us coming upon a novelty in his text and telling ourselves that it must be inconsequential, an irrelevant particle of knowledge. He effectively implies that we are telling ourselves, "Since I did not already know this, it was not worth knowing." In the world of the already known, the unknown is suspect. Such an item poses a challenge: are you ill-educated, or am I a pedant? This very fight breaks out time and again in the pages of the *Noctes Atticae*.

Gellius here does battle with an imaginary and scornful detractor whom he himself has conjured by throwing his phantasmatic sarcasm right back at him. The little snippets of knowledge Gellius provides are not contemptibly small. They are the little acorns from which mighty oaks grow. They are of good stock, and they nurture men of good stock. There is an aristocratic genealogy of knowledge here. Noble sons well suited to public life and genteel recreation wax and grow strong under the influence of such reading. The sons will grow into men who can try the case of knowledge itself equitably (*aequum*) and without detractors. They will come to know how to judge their own knowledge.

Gellius has worked himself up into a rhetorical lather: from *ecquid* on, this passage represents the special pleading of an orator. *Petimus inquam* declares as much openly. Gellius abruptly switches back and entertains another feared criticism that forks off from the previous one. Like any good advocate, Gellius is covering all the possibilities. What if the promptings are somehow incomplete? That is, what if this knowledge in miniature really is not the seed from which something grander will germinate?

36. "These descriptions of Favorinus' *Varied History* and *Notebooks* give the distinct impression that they purveyed recycled and recyclable anecdotes and trivia" (Sandy 1997:79).

37. Quintilian flags some of the dangers of pedantry. Didymus complained of a frivolous bit of learning. A book of his own is then brought out containing the same. Furthermore, extreme obscurity can be a cloak for fraud: one is free to invent citations of works and authors that never were. Accordingly, he concludes, it is a virtue for a *grammaticus* not to know certain things. See Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.8.20–21.

Then in those passages he merely meant to point us to other books and other teachers.

The next item is connected to the preceding only via the logic of fear. What if the reader finds something disgusting in here? Gellius is not to blame; it's a case to be brought against the authors on whom he relied. Challenge them, if you dare. Don't get angry with Gellius if Cato said something you don't like. Of course, the whole passage is addressed to an imaginary third party even if "they" is actually shielding us from a much more painful confrontation of "me" against "you," this author versus his reader.

The phobic quality of the arguments finishes with the ridiculous being given the sublime pride of place. What if there is a mistake in Gellius? What if you find what you think is an erroneous citation, a misspelling, a passage misattributed? Such a seeming gaffe could ruin everything. A "howler" could leave the reader so obstreperously chortling with scorn and outrage that Gellius could no longer expect a hearing. Case closed. The verdict: criminal incompetence. The sentence: exile from the community of letters. But, says Gellius, do not be so hasty. Attend to him a bit longer, long enough to weigh and consider the affair and the "authorities" that Gellius can summon to his defense.

Erit autem id longe optimum, ut qui in lectitando, <percontando>, scribendo, commentando numquam uoluptates, numquam labores ceperunt, nullas hoc genus uigilias uigilarunt neque ullis inter eiusdem Musae aemulos certationibus disceptationibusque elimati sunt, sed intemperiarum negotiorumque pleni sunt, abeant a noctibus his procul atque alia sibi oblectamenta quaerant. Vetus adagium est:

nil cum fidibus graculost, nihil cum amaracino sui.

Atque etiam, quo sit quorundam male doctorum hominum scaeuitas et inuidencia irritatio, mutuabor ex Aristophanae choro anapaesta pauca et quam ille homo festiuissimus fabulae suae spectandae legem dedit, eandem ego commentariis his legendis dabo, ut ea ne attingat neue adeat profestum et profanum uolguis a ludo musico diuersum. Versus legis datae hi sunt:

εὐφημεῖν χρή κάξιστασθαι τοῖς ἡμετέροισι χοροῖσιν,
ὅστις ἄπειρος τοιῶνδε λόγων ἢ γνώμη μὴ καθαρεύει
ἢ γενναίων ὄργια Μουσῶν μήτ' εἶδεν μήτ' ἐχόρευσεν,
τούτοις αὐδῶ, καῦθις ἀπαυδῶ, καῦθις τὸ τρίτον μάλ' ἀπαυδῶ
ἐξίστασθαι μύσταισι χοροῖς· ὑμεῖς δ' ἀνεγείρετε μολπήν
καὶ παννυχίδας τὰς ἡμέτερας, αἱ τῇδε πρέπουσιν ἑορτῇ.

It would be far and away the best if those who never took any pleasure in and never any trouble over reading, questioning, writing, and composing commentaries, if those who never kept this kind of vigil nor had their rough edges removed by any contests between rivals of the same Muse but instead were suffused with distempers and preoccupations—it would be best if such people were to hightail it away from these *Noctes* and find something else to keep them happy. There’s an old saying:

Jackdaws have no business with lyres, nor pigs with marjoram.

And just to provoke further the gaucherie and jealousy of certain ill-educated fellows, I will borrow a few anapests from a chorus of Aristophanes. That incredibly witty man laid down the law for how one was to watch his tale, and I will impose the same law for reading my commentaries so that the common and profane mob who are antithetical to musical sport will neither touch nor even approach them. The verses of the law he imposed are these:

*Watch your speech and stand clear of our chorus,
whoever has no experience of utterances such as these, or is impure at heart,
or knows neither the rites of the noble Muses nor danced in a chorus.
To these I declare, and again I insist, and verily a third time I insist
that they keep clear of our mystical choral dancing. But you, awaken song
and our festivities that last the whole of the night. They befit this festival.*

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 19–21

The two hypothetical readers return in this next section of the preface. But things shift. Most obviously, the critic of bookishness is shoved aside. Though at one point it seemed that these *commentarii* were a foretaste of broader learning and a goad to erudition, it now appears that they are in fact only of interest to the already educated. And thus as Gellius draws toward the close of his preface, the degree to which he is willing to entertain a notion of “outreach” for his project constricts ever more surely. If earlier it was true that one felt that the man who was both busy and a scholar was the ideal reader—that is, that Gellius himself or his sons were the ideal readers—here that sensation grows all but overpowering. One has to be a Gellius to appreciate Gellius and to have kept the same vigils (*uigilias uigilarunt*; λύχνους; παννυχίδας). One has to have not just read books but to have also competed in the to and fro to which the bookish subject one another. They wrangle. They attack one another. They return from the battle with their wits the better honed for it.

If you are a stranger to the Muses, then away with you. If you do not know how to fight for a Muse's affection, then away with you. If your time is spent storm-tossed, if you care for nothing but business, then away with you. One makes time for reading such as this "time permitting" and when affairs can yield to leisure. But it is clear that Gellius has no time for a man who has no time for books and that the business of bookishness trumps the business of business. For in the end, it really is inexcusable to be a rustic boor. Moreover, there is way too much to be learned for a mere sip poured off as a libation from one man's excess to be properly considered a sufficient draught for our own piety and salvation. One must lay up one's own ample stores. To read Gellius is to be Gellius. To be Gellius is to read Gellius. Others are apt to taint the truth of this mysterious antistrophe.³⁸

Gellius lays down the law: away ye uninitiated. But this gesture is itself "mysterious" and pregnant with meaning. The law is not Gellius's own law; it is Aristophanes' law. This is a law cited, not a law promulgated. The law is the law of literary citation, of citation as the "privileged" gesture of the antiquarian. The antiquarian "gives" a law to the reading of his own text by showing his knowledge of the precedent for just such a gesture. To the extent that he knows of an author who either made or can be argued to have made a law of this stamp (τύπος), Gellius can make a rubbing from this original impression and seal his own text with this secondary signet/σφραγίς. As is the law, so is the law . . . A "typical" gesture in Gellius's febrile archive.

The aims of this piece of legislation do not include the correction or chastisement of the wicked. Instead, we are interested in giving the gauche an opportunity to trip all over themselves again. That is, the Aristophanic law is cited precisely so that criminality might ensue, not that ill acts might be checked. The citation of the "Law of the Frogs" is designed, then, to promote ill will, not social concord. It is meant as a display of the might that makes right. It is a manifestation of the caprice afforded the culturally rich, who are free to rule as they please. Away, ye uneducated.³⁹

Gellius takes out a loan on some Aristophanic anapests. Aristophanes is a supremely witty man, *homo festiussimus*. The word seems well suited to a comic poet, particularly such a lively wit as Aristophanes. However, *festivus* is in fact a key word within Gellius's enterprise. Specifically, it

38. The logic of the ἀντιστρέφον in Gellius will be explicated later.

39. Compare Whitmarsh 2001:5–7 on exclusionary self-definition via *paideia* for Greek authors of Gellius's age. For Latin authors, however, Greek *paideia* is regularly the object of expropriation and competitive redeployment in a Roman context (Whitmarsh 2001:13–17, who appropriates Habinek 1998:34).

marks strong approbation for a philological moment or gesture. It makes an aesthetic commendation of scholarly practice.⁴⁰ Accordingly, Aristophanes is already like Gellius himself, even as Gellius would seem for a moment to be assimilating his practice to the poet's.⁴¹

The citation of Aristophanes is introduced with religious language appropriate to the metaphorical mystery that it introduces, a *festivus* festival. The mystery is doubly metaphorical, though: Gellius conjures the mystery of philology and philology as mystery. Philology has initiates. It makes life meaningful. It connects one to the sublime. It is incommunicable to outsiders. Gellius conjures this mystery by conjuring the chorus's own metaphor: the mystery of literature and literature as mystery. In the play *Dionysus*, the god of revelry, is on his way to resurrect Literature in the figure of a tragic poet. Literature will be (comically) weighed and (comically) considered. The drunken god will play philologist. Like Gellius, Dionysus will even make a double *compendium*. The weighing is also an abridgment: he is attempting to revive Athenian literature by means of a short-cut-cum-detour through Hades. At this moment in the play, though, Dionysus is spying on the chorus of Frogs, beholding the mystery of their dance even as they shoo all away, both the internal and the external audiences, unless, of course, they are already initiates and have themselves danced a chorus.

The situation in the play thus converges with Gellius's. The Attic daylight of the fifth century BCE underworld comedy has become the lamplight labor of the second century CE scholar. Gellius, who declared *Musarum* to be a pretentious title, now invokes the Muses twice over, once in his own voice and again via Aristophanes. Gellius makes public the fruits of his mystical nighttime communion with the Muse. This book sees the light of day, and its pages are meant to dance before our prying eyes. And yet we are either already initiates or already lost.

It is not clear to me that anyone has ever had the *scaeuitas* to declare Gellius to be a comic author and a lover of revelry. It is a bold proposal, and yet we must at least entertain it for a minute.⁴² If philology is a game, a dance, a mystery, and a festival, how does this change the way we read men like Gellius? Their play is rough. The stakes are often high for them even

40. We will return to such vocabulary later. But the *fest-* stem appears regularly: *Noctes Atticae* 1.2, 10.4, and 18.1 are but three of the twenty-one uses I could muster.

41. See Lukinovich 1990:268 on comedy as a model for the composition of Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae*.

42. Anderson 2000 explores the revelry of learned conversation in Athenaeus and its relationship to the sympotic tradition.

if we pretend they are null for ourselves. But it would be a mistake to insist that one must erase the festal from learning and to aver contrariwise that the somber eternity of the underworld represents the joyless place both where knowledge is produced and to which it is consigned in the very moment of its birth. Rather than a barren lingering over old bones, then, philology could be reimagined as a mystery cult celebrating a ritual of death and rebirth.

It is this odd “vitality” of Gellius’s enterprise that has been known to elude his casual readers.⁴³ Where there is life, there is philology. And where there is philology, there is life. The book in our hands measures Gellius himself.

Volumina commentariorum ad hunc diem uiginti iam facta sunt. Quantum autem uitae mihi deinceps deum uoluntate erit quantumque a tuenda re familiari procurandoque cultu liberorum meorum dabitur otium, ea omnia subsiciua et subsecundaria tempora ad colligendas huiuscemodi memoriarum delectatiunculas conferam. Progredietur ergo numerus librorum diis bene iuuantibus cum ipsius uitae, quantuli quomque fuerint, progressibus, neque longiora mihi dari spatia uiuendi uolo, quam dum ero ad hanc quoque facultatem scribendi commentandique idoneus.

Capita rerum, quae cuique commentario insunt, exposuimus hic uniuersa, ut iam statim declaretur, quid quo in libro quaeri inueniriue possit.

At present I have already produced twenty volumes of commentaries. However, if the gods wish me a longer life and if I have time left after looking out for my estate and seeing to the education of my children, I will apply all this remaining and less important time to gathering more such little trinkets for the memory. Therefore, the number of books will advance, with the gods’ assistance, apace with the strides of life itself no matter how little they should prove to be. And I do not want a longer span of living to be granted to me without my also being fit to take advantage of this opportunity for writing and producing commentaries.

I have here set forth all the chapter headings that belong to each *commentarius* so that it shall be clear right from the start what can be sought and found in each book.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 22–25

Twenty books of commentaries equal twenty books of life. More life will mean more commentaries. God willing, of course. Though twice invoked,

43. Not Vessey 1994:1903–4, though.

the divine *numen* nevertheless failed to provide more books. Was Gellius too busy? Were his kids too demanding? Did he get too old and his intellectual steps too short? We'll never know. Instead, we appreciate the relative ratios, the pace of life and the pace of learning.⁴⁴ In fact, Gellius is so eager to snatch at an opportunity for showing his learnedness that his invocation of the future is saturated by the philological present: *subsecundaria* is a learned reference to the *agri mensores*, men whose obscure geometrical learning is the stuff of which philological fancies are spun. Gellius will always be ready to stride forth onto the disputed plain of learning and to partition the territory judiciously.

II

Set praecipue diebus talibus, qualis est hodiernus, oculi mei requirunt meum Gellium, quem, ubicumque hoc die fuisti, spero laetum et bene ualentem celebrasse natalem meum.

The *Attic Nights* is a book that never ends. It is, then, like the *Arabian Nights* and Scheherazade's 1,001 deferrals of death. The book is a bid for the author's immortality in the here and now. Even as it assembles the past and promises it to the future, the author remains the vital link and the quickening principle. If some books are written from the perspective of a dead man—for eternity, to eternity, worldly time is my fetter, infinity my destiny—this one retains nevertheless the here and the now. The philosophy of philology is worldly.

44. NB: Book 1, chapter 1 is about learned foot size, proportion, and the measure of all things manly.

CAPITA RERVM



[Book Zero]

I

Quaesitum tractatumque, quid sint capita uel capitula Gellii.

Capita rerum, quae cuique commentario insunt, exposuimus hic uniuersa, ut iam statim declaretur, quid quo in libro quaeri inuenirique possit.

CAPITVLA LIBRI PRIMI

I. Quali proportionem quibusque collectionibus Plutarchus ratiocinatum esse Pythagoram philosophum dixerit de comprehendenda corporis proceritate, qua fuit Hercules, cum uitam inter homines uiueret.

II. . . .

I have here set forth all the chapter headings that appertain to each *commentarius* so that it shall be clear right from the start what can be sought and found in each book.

HEADLINGS OF THE FIRST BOOK

I. By what analogy and by what inferences Plutarch said that Pythagoras made his calculations of how one was to learn the size of Hercules' body when he lived his life among mortal men.

II. . . .

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 25; *capitula* 1.1

Where does one properly locate Gellius's table of contents? Gellius writes a preface, and he ends his preface by setting forth the table of contents. But is the table itself one of Gellius's books: book 0?¹ Perhaps the table contains all the other books combined. What a shame that zero does not yet exist.

1. Compare Pliny the Elder: book 1 of the *Natural History* is the index to the remaining books, and it begins, *Libro II continentur* . . . See also Suetonius's *De grammaticis et rhetoribus*, which is self-indexing.

What is the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm? Is the collection of headings itself the fitting head to affix to a text that collects? Do the words *capita rerum* end the preface, or do they begin the *capitula*? Is, then, the sentence *capita rerum quae cuique . . .* itself a lemma and hence the *caput capitulorum*? The headling of book o would thus begin, “The heads . . .”

Every thing will be clear right from the start. The (index) cards are on the table. Gellius has nothing up his sleeve. If you read this, you will know how to read Gellius. But then again, you will know how to read Gellius out of order. We are all but commanded to ignore the idea that the twenty books of the *Nights* are to be read in the order written/lived.²

As he lived, so he wrote. As he lived, so are we not going to read. The decapitated head that is stuck on a stake and planted on the outskirts of the *Nights* announces to us everything we will come to know. But in so doing it assumes that we will not in fact care to know everything, that we will skip around, that the riddle of the living/writing of the *Nights* will remain an uninteresting issue for us. There are not twenty books of life here, then, just twenty papyrus rolls filled with this and that. Roll o, though, informs us where we might grab what we are truly looking for. We will move through the text as if it were a labyrinth, but the wending will be of our own making. Gellius’s stint playing Daedalus begins/ends with an invitation to the reader to do just the same as he did, but otherwise. We are Gellius, but otherwise: *alter idem*. We are friends, second selves, uncanny doubles, bitter foes. Meanwhile, Gellius himself, the organizing mind and experienced reader, is decapitated.

The chapter headings invite us to grab onto Gellius’s work as if it were a reference book. And yet he has told us that its order is hopelessly random. What then if we were to find patterns in the arrangement of his books?³ Would this be our own fancy at work here? Why is Gellius shooing us away from such a line of inquiry? Why does he insist that we follow our own thread through the maze of erudition rather than his own? Gellius assumes that we are curious and looking for answers, but he nevertheless predisposes us to find the answers only to certain kinds of questions.

Next problem, then: what if the headings don’t really indicate what we might find if we looked to the bodies?⁴ That is, the table of contents is a

2. See Carey 2003:30–31 for parallel problems that Pliny’s table of contents introduces for reading his *Naturalis Historia*. Compare Murphy 2004:32.

3. See Henry 1994 and Marache 1967:xvi–xvii and his notes.

4. Holford-Strevens appears not to see the irony and pun in the opening to his own fourth chapter: “The variety of subject-matter between and within chapters, which defeats

reading of the text, an assertion that any given section is in fact “about this” and hence not really about that or not so much about some other thing. Chiefly missing from the disembodied headings are the very issues that allow us to flesh out a sense of the community of scholarship: the scenography of the encounters, the barbs, the snickering. Even as these elements inculcate a sense of a contextualized reading of the book itself, the table of contents steers us away from the sorts of scholarly table manners that are instilled throughout. The latter thus become subtext in more than one sense.

It is easy enough to be convinced that the *Noctes* has a consistent theory of wives.⁵ It is possible as well to believe that the first three chapters of a book all have something subtle in common or that the first and last chapters of all the books are generally more significant and worth reading in bundles. However, any such mode of reading veers away from “the author’s intentions” in a multiple sense. Not only did he not “tell” us to read in this manner; he in fact dissuades us from it.

Some have no experience of arguments such as mine:

τούτοις αὐδῶ, καὺθις ἀπαυδῶ, καὺθις τὸ τρίτον μάλ’ ἀπαυδῶ
ἐξίστασθαι μύσταισι χοροῖς.

How, then, have I read Gellius?

II

CAPITVLA HVIVS LIBRI

Praefatio Editoris

Praefatio

I. Quid sit grammaticos legere; et qua ratione de eis scripserimus.

II. Quid et quantum differat Gellius ab aliis scriptoribus.

Praefatio Altera

I. Quid sit de grammatica scribere; et qua ratione libros de ea legerimus.

II. Quae causa quodque initium fuisse dicatur nobis ad grammaticorum litteras adeundi.

III. Ad philosophum Taurum Athenas uisendi cognoscendique eius gratia uenerat V. C., praeses Cretae prouinciae, et cum eo simul eiusdem praesidis pater.

IV. Itaque quae philologia fuit facta philosophia est.

the attempts to classify them under simple headings, is matched by that of presentation” (Holford-Strevens 1988:47). His footnotes point to various others’ efforts.

5. Henry 1994 is thus clearly onto something.

Praefatio Tertia

- I. Quid senserit dixeritque Aulus Gellius in praefatione sua.
- II. Set praecipue diebus talibus, qualis est hodiernus, oculi mei requirunt meum Gellium, quem, ubicumque hoc die fuisti, spero laetum et bene ualentem celebrasse natalem meum.

Capita Rerum

- I. Quaesitum tractatumque, quid sint capita uel capitula Gellii.
- II. CAPITVLA HVIVS LIBRI

Liber Primus

- I. Verba ex Institutione M. Fabii Quintiliani, quae libuit meminisse, de sermone et partibus eius. Quomodo Gellius eisdem uerbis usus est.
- II. De materiis infamibus, quas Graeci ἀδόξους appellant, a me exercendi gratia disputatis.
- III. De materiis nobilibus, quas Graeci εὐδόξους appellant, a Gellio auctoritatis fines demonstrandi gratia disputatis.
- IV. Quem in modum disseruerit Fauorinus consultus a Gellio super officio iudicis.
- V. Cuiusmodi sit lex apud eruditos de legibus percontandi disserendique; et quae sit eius legis reprehensio.
- VI. Quid sit homo bene eruditus et quid a homine grammatico differat. Quibus uerbis “penu” definita sit.
- VII. Obscuritates non adsignemus culpae scribentium, sed incitiae non adsequentium.
- VIII. Quid sit “municipium” et quid a “colonia” differat; et quid sint “municipes” quaeque sit eius uocabuli ratio ac proprietas; atque inibi, quod diuus Hadrianus in senatu de iure atque uocabulo municipum uerba fecit.
- IX. Circulus doctorum hominum C. Caesarem, excellentis ingenii ac prudentiae uirum, salutat.
- X. De analogia Caesaris et ratione eius dissero.

Liber Secundus

- I. Quid sit ratio et quomodo eo uerbo Gellius usus sit.
- II. De rationum generibus
- III. An rationem ei constare potest qui οἰκονομὴν σοφισμάτων tractat?
- IV. Potest huic meae tam ancipiti captioni isse obuiam? Sicine ab adulescente discipulo magister philologiae inclutus suo sibi argumento confutatus est et captionis uersute excogitatae frustratus fuit?
- V. De argumentorum reciprocorum ambiguitate dico Gellium non eadem sentire et dicere.
- VI. De ambiguitatibus Gellii cursim retractatum est.

VII. Ratione uitae sit compositura uocum?

VIII. Qui de auribus disserat quas auris habeat scio. Ut Persius dixit:
“uidi, uidi, ipse, libelle: auriculas asini quis non habet?”

Liber Tertius

I. At ille non ibat infitias fecisse, sed id solitum esse fieri defendebat turpitudinemque delicti exemplorum usu et consuetudinis uenia deprecabatur.

II. Quod Gellius in libris symposiacis quaestiones ancipites lepide agitare solitus est.

III. Ego de te ad Caesarem quam diligenter scripserim, tute scis; quam saepe, ego.

IV. Est, fatebor, aliquid tamen; ut, cum in sole ambulem, etiam si ego aliam ob causam ambulem, fieri natura tamen, ut colorer, sic, cum istos libros ad Misenum—nam Romae uix licet—studiosius legerim, sentio illorum tactu orationem meam quasi colorari.

V. Quid mihi discedens mandarum memini; quid ego tibi scripserim te non arbitror oblitum.

Vb. <*****>

VI. Scito enim me, postea quam in urbem uenerim, redisse cum ueteribus amicis, id est cum libris nostris, in gratiam.

VIIb. <*****>

VII. Quid sit scientem agere.

VII. Postrema quaestionum omnium haec fuit: “scripserim,” “legerim,” “uenerim” cuius temporis uerba sint, praeteriti an futuri an utriusque.

Liber Quartus

I. Aesopus autem et Roscius famosissimi comoediarum <actores> fuerunt. Ac per hoc [Horatius] ostendit stultos homines, qui non merito ac uirtute <st>i<l>i, sed tantum modo personarum auctoritate mo<u>eantur.

II. Gellium audiui hoc dicere: se usum esse circumlocutione quadam poetica.

III. Quae Fauorinum et Taurum egomet audiui dicere.

IV. Adulescens hic sine controuersia eruditus est.

V. Quae Varronem et Nigidium dicere legi.

VI. Sed quod in hoc libro scripsit, neque audisse neque legisse, sed ipsum sese in urbe Roma uidisse oculis suis confirmat.

VII. Qua ratione Tiro Tullius in libros Noctium Atticarum deductus est.

VIII. Idem tert. enerratum est.

IX. De tabula picta in qua ancillulae et nani pictorque ipse et quidam alii homines descripti sunt.

Liber Quintus

Liber Sextus

I. Figuras habitusque uerborum noue aut insigniter dictorum in Gelliano illo carmine ruminabamur et, ut quaeque uox indidem digna animaduerti subuenerat, qua nos quoque possemus uti, memoriae mandabamus.

II. Quid significet proprie “legere”; et in quae diuertacula significatio istius uocabuli flexa sit. et uerba Auli Gellii ex Noctibus eius super ea re sumpta.

IIb. <*****>

III. Syllogismorum captionumque dialecticarum laqueis strepo κυριεύοντας et ἡσυχάζοντας et σωρείτας aliosque id genus griphos neminem posse dicens nisi me dissoluere.

IV. Quod in libris Gellii scriptum est amicum suum scire quo nomine fuerit, qui primus “grammaticus” appellatus est.

V. “Triones” per sese nihil significare aiunt, sed uocabuli esse supplementum.

Vb. <*****>

VI. Quid sint subsciua et subsecundaria opera.

Liber Septimus

I. Lis atque contentio grammaticorum inlustrum enarrata super casu uocatio uocabuli, quod est “auctor.”

II. Quod Q. Ennius auctor Noctium Atticarum sit.

III. Quod Macrobius auctor Noctium Atticarum sit.

IIIb. <*****>

IIIc. <*****>

IV. Quod Holford-Streuens auctor Noctium Atticarum sit.

V. Quod Holford-Streuens Aulum Gellium iterum ediderit.

VI. Quot scriptores, tot auctores Noctium Atticarum sint.

VII. Quod egomet auctor Noctium Atticarum sim.

Liber Octauus

I. “Hesterna noctu” rectene an cum uitio dicatur et quanam super istis uerbis grammatica traditio sit; item quod decemuiri in XII tabulis “nox” pro “noctu” dixerunt.

II. Quid mihi usu uenerit interpretari et quasi effingere uolenti locos quosdam Platonicos Latina oratione.

III. Quid significet in ueterum libris scriptum “plerique omnes”; et quod ea uerba accepta a Graecis uidentur.

- IV. Lepidissima altercatio Fauorini philosophi aduersus quendam
intempestiuum de ambiguitate uerborum disserentem; atque inibi
uerba quaedam ex Naeuio poeta et Cn. Gellio non usitate collocata;
atque ibidem a P. Nigidio origines uocabulorum exploratae.

Appendix

- I. Quomodo auctor finem inire debeat.
II. Quod δόγμα σαντοῦ πεποίησαι furti indicum sit.
III. Fauorinus detertere uolens ac depellere adulescentes a genethliacis
et quibusdam aliis id genus, qui prodigiosis artibus futura omnia
dicturos pollicentur, nullo pacto adeundos eos esse consulendosque
huiuscemodi argumentis concludebat: “Aut aduersa” inquit “euen-
tura dicunt aut prospera.”
IV. Semper ego lector tantum?

Fragmenta Adespota

Spuria

Tomus I

Auctoritas

Ratio

Usus

Indices

LIBER PRIMVS



Auctoritas

I

Verba ex Institutione M. Fabii Quintiliani, quae libuit meminisse, de sermone et partibus eius. Quomodo Gellius eisdem uerbis usus est.

Accounts of language circulated in antiquity. However, it is probably inaccurate to describe these as theoretical, as “theories of language.” Such a designation would imply that language was a discrete object, that it was a self-contained thing to which the mind might apply itself in accordance with a rationally guided set of dictates. The sorts of requirements we might insist upon as the basic constituents of a science of language are unlikely to be met in the ancient period. The problem is not so much that nobody was interested in or capable of a rational account of speech, but rather the rational was itself only one of several competing methods of speaking of speech. There is a hybridity that suffuses the enterprise. This hybridity cuts against the production of a sense of language as a system and the generation of a scientific approach to questions of language. Instead, multiple possible orientations to questions of language permit “linguistics” in the ancient world to resemble a field where strategy and tactics emerge, where we see players routinely pursuing extralinguistic ends in the course of their commentary on language.

For example, in Quintilian we read the following:

Est etiam sua loquentibus observatio, sua scribentibus. Sermo constat ratione uetustate auctoritate consuetudine. Rationem praestat praecipue analogia, nonnumquam etymologia. Vetera maiestas quaedam et, ut sic dixerim, religio commendat. Auctoritas ab oratoribus uel historicis peti solet. nam poetas metri necessitas excusat, nisi si quando nihil impediens in utroque modulatione pedum alterum malunt, qualia sunt

imo de stirpe recisum
et aëriae quo congersere palumbes
et silice in nuda

et similia: cum summorum in eloquentia uirorum iudicium pro ratione, et uel error honestus est magnos duces sequentibus. Consuetudo uero certissima loquendi magistra, utendumque plane sermone, ut nummo, cui publica forma est.

Speakers have their own set of concerns, writers another. Speech is composed of the following: the rational, the old, the authoritative, the customary. Analogy is the chief source of *ratio*, although frequently etymology offers it as well. A certain majesty and, if I might say so, religious quality recommend old words. Authority is generally sought from the orators or the historians. Poets are excused by metrical exigencies, unless they pick some alternative when there is no impediment to the modulation of the meter. Examples of this are

imo de stirpe recisum
and aëriae quo congersere palumbes
and silice in nuda

and similar phrases. Meanwhile, the judgment of men of preeminent eloquence is a substitute for *ratio*, and it is even a noble error if one is following great leaders. Customary use, though, is the most steady teacher of speaking, and speech must be like a coin: it must bear a public stamp.

—QUINTILIAN, *Institutio oratoria* 1.6.1–3

From an ancient perspective this is a canonical description.¹ From a contemporary perspective the problems in Quintilian's passage are legion. First, this does not seem to be about language as an abstract entity. Rather, Quintilian opens by distinguishing speech from writing. The governing category "language" is absent. Next, the list of principles out of which speech is composed are incommensurate. One need only compare that famed Chinese encyclopedia in which animals are divided into (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame to appreciate that there is a disorder to this orderly list of things.²

1. Law 1995:80 traces the thought embodied in this passage from Quintilian to Late Latin Grammarians and St. Augustine and then on to Vergilius Maro Grammaticus. There are many intervening figures who could be mentioned, and many preceding ones as well. Compare Law 2003:62 and see the list of grammars at Law 2003:66.

2. Regarding the Chinese encyclopedia, see Foucault 1973:xv, where he archives Borges's imperial archive. Compare Murphy 2004:30 on reading Pliny: "Often, having set out to

While it may be true that Quintilian describes the way one ought to speak in Rome, this description is not “ancient linguistics” in the sense that linguistics here resembles that which we understand as linguistics today. *Ratio* is cut down to size: there are only two principles of reason, analogy and etymology, neither of which looks all that rational when seen up close and in use by an ancient scholar. Old words are good, but their goodness is ineffable, a pointed mystery. Quintilian pretends to speak of his reluctance to speak the word “religion,” but mystification is all but *de rigueur* at such moments. Authority comes from authorized authors. Once one presupposes a canon, *auctoritas* is merely circular reasoning.³ Poets can be used with difficulty. Quintilian feels free to digress on meter. Then Quintilian circles back and whacks *ratio* in the kneecaps: it is readily trumped. You can do right by doing wrong. Perhaps you even should err. Finally, we get to common use: it is the best teacher even as it is irrational and unauthorized. The best teacher of rhetoric at Rome, Quintilian, reasonably and authoritatively says as much. He mints an analogy for the occasion: a word is like a coin. Of course, coins have many interesting possibilities: they can be counterfeited; they bear faces of emperors and the like; they can get worn down and indistinct; they can be hoarded.⁴ But Quintilian is interested more in circulating the idea of circulation even as he holds in reserve the authority and rationale for decertifying the common currency.

There are, then, too many ways to look at language in Quintilian. Maybe he is just muddle headed. If so, he had plentiful company: his account is similar to many others in its basic outline.⁵ Varro depicts his own project as an inquiry into the manner in which “words were imposed upon things.”⁶ Although I do not wish to reduce Varro’s whole text to just one

consult the *Natural History* for the answer to a particular question, I have arrived on the far periphery of what I wanted to know unsure of how I got there, dazed by the charms of a dozen irrelevant facts. An animal may suggest a medical cure; an item of trade, a place; a place, a story about a king.” Later we will discuss the taming of embalmed words that belonged to the emperor. So perhaps there is hope for a certain sort of alternative order after all.

3. The wheel keeps on rolling well into the Middle Ages. See Minnis 1984:12: “The thinking we are investigating seems to be circular: the work of an *auctor* was a book worth reading; a book worth reading had to be the work of an *auctor*. No ‘modern’ writer could decently be called an *auctor* in a period in which men saw themselves as dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants, i.e. the ‘ancients.’”

4. Contrast Fronto on words and coins: the new are more likely bogus, the old are precious (Fronto, *Ad M. Antoninum de orationibus* 13). See also Marache 1952:151.

5. See Holford-Strevens 1988:126–28.

6. *quemadmodum uocabula essent imposita rebus in lingua latina, sex libris exponere institui* (*De lingua Latina* 5.1). Compare *Noctes Atticae* 13.17, which opens: *Qui uerba Latina*

phrase, it is clear that to the extent that he chooses to emphasize this element of his theory of language, his work will necessarily turn around intentions, agents, and a sort of anthropology-cum-history of language.⁷

Gellius inherits this and similar tangles, emphasizes certain elements, and adapts the whole to his uses. He was a man obsessed with “good Latin,” and it is thus not surprising that his outlook generally aligns with that of Quintilian, a teacher of “good Latin.” The salient difference is that one has a bookish and retrospective relationship to “the good” and the other a more pragmatic and contemporary outlook.⁸ In the case of his linguistic tools, Gellius is fairly reserved. Gellius’s discussions largely confine themselves to *usus/consuetudo*, *ratio*, and *auctoritas*. He is slow to theorize any of these, and this is no surprise: the “point” of a category like authority, as is clear from Quintilian, is that it can displace the rationalizations of theory.

A general theory of the sign is not deemed necessary.⁹ Linguistics is not its own domain. The authority of the author who makes a linguistic argument may well be more important than the grounds of that argument.

fecerunt quique his probe usi sunt, . . . This is an unusual moment, though. Gellius does not normally tell stories of making and singular origins. Varro’s linguistic theories have been much studied. See, for example, Roesch 1999 and Taylor 1974. Cardauns 2001:30–39 offers a useful introduction to the *De lingua Latina* and the related bibliography. See also Baratin 1989:490: the ancient focus on the individual word impedes the development of the concept of “syntax” as we understand it. Compare Taylor 1974:9–10 on Varro’s “atomistic” approach to language.

7. See Flobert 1989:745 on *declinatio uoluntaria* in Varro, that is, the free and arbitrary creation of derivative words. The example given is of Romulus imposing a derivative form of his name on Rome itself: a striking political precedent for linguistic theory. *uoluntatem appello, cum unus quiuis a nomine aliae <rei> imponit nomen, ut Romulus Romae (De lingua Latina 10.15)*. Compare Taylor 1974:21–27, and see Taylor 1974:53–56 on the limits of this process. See Vaahtera 1998 for ancient views of derivation more generally. And see Vaahtera 1998:152–55 on etymology in Gellius.

8. Quintilian on justifying innovative Latinity: *uerum auctoritate uetustate consuetudine plerumque defenditur, saepe etiam ratione quadam (Institutio oratoria 9.3.3)*. The terms are familiar to readers of Gellius, but they have been impressed into different service: today’s Latin looks backward in order to go forward. And just about all of contemporary Latin is “figurative” (i.e., a sort of rhetorical innovation) relative to the Latin of old, he says (*Institutio oratoria 9.3.1*). Sin sagely, then.

9. “Jamais les grammairiens antiques ne décrivent les unités du discours en tant que telles” (Charpin 1986:407). See also the related observations that follow this declaration in Charpin: “mais n’introduisent jamais des procédures scientifiques” (409). “Les unités du discours ne sont jamais présentées dans leur spécificité” (411). The Stoics had something like linguistics. See Atherton and Blank 2003. And Varro’s own theory of the sign is worth considering as a protolinguistic moment. See Roesch 1999. However, moments of abstraction are not the same as abstract disciplines. Compare Atherton and Blank 2003:311–12.

And of the three major principles, use, logic, and authority, authority has a pronounced tendency in Gellius to trump the other two and to insinuate itself into their realms. One consequence of this bias toward authorization is that a purely analytic account of the Latin language and grammar will not be entertained. Similarly, a neutral history of Latin, what was used when, is also unwanted.

It would be easy to overstate my case and to assert provocatively that “Latin does not exist for the Romans.” The point is instead that there are three main tools that are employed to examine Latin. But they are not tools of the same order.¹⁰ Accordingly, the Roman account of Latin is not one that produces a portrait of a simple and discrete object. Moreover, each of these tools insinuates itself into discussions seemingly guided by the others. It is not the case that there are three versions of Latin that need to be reconciled: the *ratio* version, the *usus* version, and the *auctoritas* version. Instead, there are a logic-of-authority version of Latin and an authority-of-logic version as well. The combinatorial set is, then, logic, practice, authority, logic of practice, practice of logic, logic of authority, authority of logic, practice of authority, and authority of practice. This set of approaches to Latin when taken in its entirety provides the *dispar* answer to the question, what is Latin for Gellius?

Gellius is so within Latin and so of Latin and so by Latin—and we can see him taking great pains to ensure that such is the case—that asking him to abstract Latin itself is tantamount to asking Vesper to write a meteorological textbook: at best he would tell you of his cousin Notus, of the loves of Auster, and a variety of other charming tales. René Marache says of Gellius’s general outlook that “la science est faite pour l’homme et non l’homme pour la science.”¹¹ This maxim, though, captures the essence of a larger issue: the concrete practices of erudite humanism forestall the production of abstract human sciences such as linguistics.

II

De materiis infamibus, quas Graeci ἀδόξους appellant, a me exercendi gratia disputatis.

By what right do I make my claims concerning Gellius? By what right do I disagree with other Gellian—in more than one sense of the word—scholars? But hasn’t all of this been said before? And if it has not, then is it in fact worth saying at all?

10. Compare Charpin 1986:402–5.

11. Marache 1967:xxiv and Marache 1952:256.

Let us, then, put the question of my authority to diagnose Gellius's authority. The fonts of my legitimacy can be imagined as various. The authority has been invested in me by the institution that decreed me to be *Philosophiae Doctor*. Here one might want to go back and double-check the actual records and transcripts to verify both that such happened and that there are not grounds to suspect that *Semidoctor* might not have been a better appellation.

That institutional authority, though, is itself readily resolved into a question of the personal authority of those who specifically supervised my instruction: Which *grammatici* taught me to be a *grammaticus*, then? Did I learn from an Apollinaris, or was it a provincial schoolmaster or even some charlatan? Do I take my cues from a Favorinus? And of course, there are those who have nothing good to say about Favorinus himself despite his fame. Gellius's Favorinus is not Polemo's, nor is he Lucian's.¹² One person's sense of authority does not always tally with another's.

Despite having been decreed *doctus* at that one moment and as a function of meeting the partial degree requirements by dissertating on a specific topic (*de aliqua re disserui*), is my knowledge in fact transferable to the question of Gellius? Have I studied him long enough? Have I studied those who have studied him long enough? There is, then, the question of the antiquity of my antiquarian studies. It could be that I perhaps understand only the *usus* of Gellius or aspects of his *ratio* while nevertheless remaining woefully deficient in the particular of his *auctoritas*. It would also be useful to know where I am presently teaching and my academic rank: this institutional authority ought to vouch for my intellectual authority.

As the author of other works, I am perhaps authorized to pen this one as well. Note the archaism, "to pen." Clearly I am in touch with at least one version of the antique. The other works, of course, may well disqualify me. The authority of the precedent set in those works may in fact be no authority at all. One would wish to consult the names of the presses that published those works, that publishes this one. It would be helpful as well to read reviews, to gauge the consensus of the community of scholars and the collective *auctoritas* of the *uiri boni*, the good men of philology.

If this work merely reiterates the work of others, it merits praise provided those others are themselves praiseworthy. Gellius does not ask of himself

12. See Gleason 1995. Holford-Strevens 1988:72–75 more briefly enumerates the many complaints. Marache 1952 surveys Gellius's portrait of Favorinus as the image of an ideal man. Beall 2001 revisits the issue with an eye to overcoming the potential shock one might feel at Gellius's enthusiasm given the many and substantial differences between the two men. Gellius himself comes to seem "racier" at the end of the process.

originality. He does not even ask that of the authors he reads. The notion of the original and the first is of interest, but not of great interest. In fact, originality is a potentially disruptive category. It tends to dissipate the sense of community and continuity. It is a principle of change. One might prefer instead a pleasing reorganization of the already said, a selection of flowers artfully arranged, in short, a *florilegium*. Leo Franc Holford-Strevens has said much of this already. Robert Kaster's sociology of Gellius is excellent as it stands. I bring a bouquet to the feast of the erudite as a pleasing centerpiece and occasion for still more commentary. To ask more of me is to misunderstand scholarship itself.

"Since I did not already know this, it was not worth knowing." If this all has not been said before, then it in all likelihood should not be said now. To do so is at best bad table manners. Others might call it parricide. *Res nouae*, "new things," revolutionary. The imperial age has set aside the naked violence of innovation. To the extent that it is allowed, change is more appropriately cloaked in the *toga uirilis* of continuity.¹³

But maybe transgression can be reconceptualized within the boundaries of propriety. Bad taste can itself be just another species of erudite good manners. Favorinus used to handle scandalous subjects (*infames materias*) such as the praise of Thersites.¹⁴ There are three praiseworthy aspects, Gellius says he said, to this activity: it rouses one's talent; it exercises one's subtlety; it masters intractable material (*usu difficultatibus*). And Favorinus not only would plead such contrary cases, but he even wrote up the minutes of the proceedings and published them.¹⁵

If I am not offering the pleasure of authoritative pronouncements, then it may be that I am offering the perverse pleasure of scurrilous declarations. There is something infamous about writing a whole book on Gellius, a minor author and one happily ignored. It takes a certain genius and

13. Compare 18.4.1: *Cum iam adulescentuli Romae praetextam et puerilem togam mutassemus magistrosque tunc nobis nosmet ipsi exploratiores quaereremus*. For Gellius a change of clothing occasions nothing so much as a rededication to continuing his studies.

14. 17.12.2. We have already been instructed how to respond to the name Thersites: the chapter cataloging bad speakers flags him as the only person in Homer to be branded with antiepic, antimythic, and antic cosmological language: ἀμετροεπῆ, ἀκριτόμυθον, ἄκοσμα (1.15.11). Holford-Strevens implicitly encourages an identification of the infamy of the man and his material (1988:76). See also Fronto himself on the speech of a Thersites as opposed to that of a Menelaus (*De eloquentia* 2.6). It is clear in this passage that "the speech of a Caesar" is analogous to the speech of a Menelaus.

15. Compare Marache 1952:133–43 on similar pursuits in Fronto, namely, the *Laudes neglegentiae* and the *Laudes fumi et pulueris*. See Anderson 1993:171–99 on *adoxa paradoxa* more generally. See Champlin 1980 for an overview of Fronto and Champlin 1980:46–50 on Fronto as seen in the pages of Gellius.

subtlety to handle such intractable material. Writing it up and offering it to the community of readers are an excursus from reputable philology that nevertheless remains within the ambit of the stadium of knowledge proper and proper knowledge.

III

De materiis nobilibus, quas Graeci εὐδόξους appellant, a Gellio auctoritatis fines demonstrandi gratia disputatis.

By now it is clear that I could easily have been talking about Gellius as well. In some particulars one hopes that I was only talking about Gellius: our arguments not weighed in and of themselves? Infamy! The first person was also the third. What I read and who I am are readily confused. To recapitulate the capital chapters of inquiry: By what right does Gellius make his claims concerning Caesar? By what right does he disagree with other ancient—in more than one sense of the word—scholars? But hasn't all his material been said before? And if it has not, then was it in fact worth saying at all?

Gellius is and wishes to be a “player” in the game of ancient erudition. He passes his own judgments, but he also clearly stages for us the process by which he himself rose to the position of literary *iudex*. In fact, Gellius himself was once named a judge proper. The proprieties, obligations, and traditions of a legal judge at once became a matter of inquiry, interrogation, and report. One of the first things Gellius did when appointed to his post was to conduct antiquarian research into judging (14.2). Gellius thus passes seamlessly from judging scholarly disputes to the scholarship of adjudication to actual judgment.

Let us begin, then, by recording a certain number of preliminary sociological judgments before we ourselves move on to judging Gellius as a literary judge.¹⁶ Gellius fills his pages with portraits of nameless and trifling grammarians, uppity youths, and sage counsel from a group of prominent literary men who were the teachers of the young Gellius and the friends and advisors of the more mature Gellius. A detailed account of the cast of characters will be offered later. For now it will suffice to observe that while the humble grammarians may themselves have inculcated an aristocratic ethos, been proud of their self-made status, and delighted in arbitrating the boundaries between common usage and authoritative precedents, Gellius

16. See Schmitz 1997 for a comprehensive examination of the political and sociological role of *paideia* in the Second Sophistic. Much of his analysis can be applied to the *Noctes* as well.

and his friends thrill in cutting these arrivistes down to size and thus preventing their full arrival in the space of legitimate learning.¹⁷ Gellius repeatedly aligns himself on the side of authorized *auctoritas* against the analogist *ratio* of the grammarians.¹⁸

In fact, the cruelty of the abuse of the grammarians as mere pedants testifies more to the inclusion of their research within the sphere of valued cultural enterprises than it does to their exclusion. The traditional aristocracy of birth and learning has appropriated this kind of knowledge even as it tends to refuse to recognize the professionals who dedicate themselves exclusively to such knowledge.¹⁹ Gentlemanliness has expanded some of its possibilities, but the broader rules of exclusivity remain little changed. Accordingly, the *Noctes* can be read as a demonstration of the proper appropriation of this potentially improper material.²⁰

I wish to defer until later further discussion of the “practices of authority” in Gellius and their relationship to the *mise en scène* of the whole. For now let us only adumbrate some of the major functions. We have Gellius the reader, Gellius the writer, Gellius the student, Gellius the reporter, and Gellius the performer of knowledge. The functions routinely overlap, and they do so in a somewhat strategic manner. For example, the reports of others’ performances of knowledge bolster our sense of Gellius’s own performances: we have been taught how to read such scenes. Moreover, a lot of the reporting is done from the eyes of a younger Gellius, who records the masterful performances of his teachers, the same men who will be represented as Gellius’s friends and table companions in scenes with a later dramatic date.

Authority saturates the text at a variety of levels. First, there is the technical issue of the authority of a passage from an ancient prestige author: Ennius used this word . . . But there is also the derivative authority of the old scholarship of such passages: Varro said that Ennius said . . . Next comes the authority of current commentary, and this can cite either Ennius

17. See Kaster 1988:13–14 (aristocratic ethos); 17 (self-made status); 19 (arbitrating boundaries), and 51 (vis-à-vis arrivistes). Compare Holford-Strevens 1988:126–27 and Vardi 2001. For Fronto’s similar cruelty, see Champlin 1980:149.

18. See Marache 1967:xxiii and Marache 1952:208–10. Holford-Strevens observes: “*Auctoritas* is the highest principle in Gellius’ eye; neither *ratio* nor *consuetudo* can take its place” (1988:130). Holford-Strevens also highlights an important irony: Gellius and the grammarians are both trying to curb the drift of Latin, one by means of precedents, the other party with their rules (1988:128). See also Atherton 1998 on the sociology of grammar.

19. Kaster 1988:59.

20. Kaster 1988:60. Vardi 2001 expands Kaster’s thesis about *grammatici* in particular and sees in Gellius a champion of gentlemanly erudition more generally against the exclusivity of the narrow expert who arrogates to himself all authority on any given topic.

directly or Varro's Ennius: Favorinus said that Varro said that . . . Ennius need not be read firsthand. Eliding Varro's name is perfectly acceptable.²¹ Varro may be at times omitted, but he is not forgotten: he gets his chapters elsewhere. In a sense, the process by which we talk of otherwise lost pieces of Ennius without mentioning Gellius is a practice entirely consonant with Gellius's own but for our failure to circle back to praise Gellius eventually.

In addition to the scholarship of authority and the authority of scholarship, though, Gellius saturates his text with the scenography of authority. There are fine meals in the country villas of gentleman-scholars. Such scene setting is generally the first task of the wealth of chapters that report conversations instead of merely recording annotations. An exemplary moment occurs very early in the *Noctes Atticae*. The second chapter of the first book opens thus:

Herodes Atticus, uir et Graeca facundia et consulari honore praeditus, accersebat saepe, nos cum apud magistros Athenis essemus, in uillas ei urbi proximas me et clarissimum uirum Seruilianum compluresque alios nostrates, qui Roma in Graeciam ad capiendum ingenii cultum concesserant.

Heroides Atticus, a man possessed of both Greek eloquence and consular status, regularly summoned me when I was studying in Athens to his villa near the city. Also invited were the senator Servilianus and a number of our countrymen who had gone to Greece from Rome in order to cultivate their intellect.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 1.2.1

The political and the intellectual are pointedly yokemates in Herodes' case. His consulship and his eloquence are explicitly coordinated. Gellius studies but has no status explicitly marked. Servilianus has his political standing flagged. But he is clearly part of the crowd that have come to Greece to better themselves and who find at Atticus's Attic villa the perfect place to polish their politic manners. The *Noctes* as a text reveals itself to be a vast network of cross references. Social and political ties and connections comprise a fundamental element of this same network.²² Indeed, they are not even a subtext. Before the scholarly point is made in a chapter, the status of the speakers comes out first and foremost.

21. See Holford-Strevens 1988:52–53 for an outline of the history Gellian source criticism. Compare Marache 1967:xxxvii–xli. See also Hinds 1997:72–73 on the multiple layers and generations of the reception of Ennius archived at 12.2.

22. See also Holford-Strevens 1988:111 on Gellius's name-dropping.

The Gellius we see within the text is apprenticing in social and intellectual life simultaneously. The Gellius who narrates the preface offers his text to his sons that they might dip into it when their political obligations might afford them the opportunity. In reading this sort of book, however, they will hardly notice a sharp transition from the worldliness of their concrete affairs. The table talk of the learned is itself already a sociopolitical occasion.²³ It is easy to see how a self-made *grammaticus* could cut a meager figure when sitting next to an erudite former consul and Very Big Fish. As readers of Gellius, then, we are invited to see ourselves as either potential or actual men of taste and accomplishment. Raw erudition, knowing for the sake of knowing, has no seat at the table. You are invited to go to Athens/Atticus/*The Attic Nights* for intellectual cultivation, and the knowledge you will encounter there will be less the knowledge suited to obscure and pedantic annotations than the sort of material that circulates among the community of the powerful at their leisure.

The disorderly order of the text ensures that there is no sense of progress to such themes. That is, we do not begin with young Gellius the gentleman scholar in training and end with the gravity of the senior philologist-statesman. Instead, Gellius is always both young and old, always both deferential and asserting himself. In the self-consciously hierarchical world of Rome, there is nothing jarring about such a structure: except for the emperor everyone has both superiors and inferiors, and even among relative peers one recognizes distinctions in age and achievement. Tactful negotiation of the roles of leading and following is part of the artistry of being a good man.²⁴

It is clear, though, that the new *uir bonus* is not so much an orator and *peritus dicendi*, but is more a philologist and *peritus legendi*.²⁵ And he is a

23. Obviously table talk itself is a major genre in its own right within antiquity running from Plato's *Symposium* to the *Table Talk* of Plutarch, who was a friend of Favorinus and a teacher of Taurus. Gellius has read both works. See also Anderson 1993:176–79 on other feasts of learning during the Second Sophistic. Weissenberger 1996:11 asserts that we have to take into consideration the centuries-old tradition of sympotic literature before we can begin to appreciate Lucian's play with it. See as well Lukinovich 1990 on Athenaeus's feast. And see Frazier 1994 and Branham 1989:104–11 on Lucian's *Symposium*, a place where *eris* wins out over the *philia* that is expected at such gatherings. See also Harrison 2000:30–31 on Apuleius's *Quaestiones conuiuiales*. Braund and Wilkins 2000 both adds to the bibliography of symposiastic literature and gathers the wealth of prior work on the topic.

24. See Habinek 1998:50–52 on "The Good Friend."

25. See the snide and ironic invocation of *uir bonus* at 7.16.3, where someone is caught misreading. At 5.21.6 another attack on a perceived error begins with this loaded appellation.

reader of scholarly texts as well as primary sources. In fact, he is as like as not to privilege some bookish authority instead of seeking out an authority figure from the past itself. For example, Gellius does not gravitate toward the other famed discussions of the good man: he pauses to praise the remarks of the republican antiquarian Nigidius and his description of the *uir bonus*.²⁶ We ought to note that the man skilled at reading becomes a good man precisely by reading the old definitions of virtuous manliness. They have been consumed, cataloged, and are ready for redeployment and textual criticism. The resulting hybrid good-man-of-books-cum-performances may strike us as somewhat comic, but it is nevertheless a powerful model of the embedding of the past in the present. Furthermore, even as we may lament the impurity of this knowledge, Gellius would likely retort that our own insistence upon deracinated knowing is hopelessly vulgar and tedious and serves no discernible worldly end.

Amid the seemingly ignoble materials routinely treated by Gellius, there is nevertheless an almost constant stream of noble epithets attached to the material bearers of this knowledge. Moreover, this nobility regularly includes bookishness as one of its chief terms. Merely examining a few of the uses of the word *uir* in Gellius is instructive. If Herodes is “a man who . . .,” he is but one of many, many “men who . . .” Pericles, one of the most famous Athenians of all time, nevertheless finds himself glossed and vouched for: *uir egregio ingenio bonisque omnibus disciplinis ornatus* (1.3.20). One notes, then, that he seems to have been a scholar not unlike Herodes Atticus and Gellius himself. Plutarch is “my/our Plutarch,” a fine scholar and a sensible man: *Plutarchus noster, uir doctissimus ac prudentissimus* (1.26.4).²⁷ A republican legal expert makes an inquiry of a republican antiquarian, and Gellius is happy to record the moment while emphasizing the bookish outlook of the jurist: *Seruius Sulpicius, iuris ciuilis auctor, uir bene litteratus, scripsit ad M. Varronem rogauitque* (2.10.1). Cato, famed as a politician, orator, and moralist, is a diligent scholar in Gellius’s eyes: *M. Cato, uir in cognoscendis rebus multi studii* (2.28.5). You can count on the books of Aristoxenus the musician: *Aristoxenus musicus, uir litterarum ueterum diligentissimus, Aristoteli philosophi auditor* (4.11.4). Paulus may be a poet, but he is no slouch when it comes time to hit the library: *Apud*

26. See 11.11.3: “*Vir bonus*” inquit “*praestare debet, ne mentiatur, prudens, ne mendacium dicat; alterum incidit in hominem, alterum non.*”

27. Against Gellius’s casual appropriation, see the conclusion of Swain’s survey of Plutarch’s relationship to Rome: “Taking everything together, we can see that Plutarch did not in any way chafe at Roman rule, which he thought in accordance with divine planning, and yet was at heart a non-integrationist” (1996:185).

Sigillaria forte in libraria ego et Iulius Paulus poeta, uir memoria nostra doctissimus, consideramus (5.4.1). In case we have forgotten, Paulus is recertified later: *Iulius Paulus poeta, uir bonus et rerum litterarumque ueterum inpenso doctus* (19.7.1). As one of the “heroes” of the *Noctes Atticae*, Taurus gets his due measure of glowing accreditation: *Philosophus Taurus, uir memoria nostra in disciplina Platonica celebratus* (7.10.1). And Julius Caesar is remembered by Gellius for his philology: *uir ingenii praecellentis, sermonis praeter alios suae aetatis castissimi* (19.8.3). This tag introduces one of several readings of Caesar’s *De analogia*.²⁸

Some of the praises are rather striking from the standpoint of “the past.” That is, the antiquarian’s relationship to his subjects can differ from the documented contemporary reactions. Sertorius, were you to ask Romans a bit closer to his own era, might be described as “a dangerous break-away general who set up a counter-senate in Spain.” In Gellius we read *Sertorius, uir acer egregiusque dux, et utendi regendique exercitus peritus fuit* (15.22.1). The chapter praises his mastery over barbarians without noting that his barbarian army was fighting Rome. Mimes are a low and generally scandalous genre.²⁹ But Gellius introduces us to a philologist author of mimes: *Cn. Matius, uir eruditus, in mimiambis suis non absurde neque absone finxit “recentatur” pro eo, quod Graeci dicunt ἀνανεοῦται* (15.25.1).³⁰ A man’s era, not his genre, is our first concern.³¹ An entire swathe of time has been more or less indiscriminately “canonized.” Meanwhile, the less-old like Ovid and Horace are left pointedly unmentioned. In this sense “archaic” Latin is partially self-authorizing, and conversely imperial-era Latin is self-deauthorizing or at least humble until proven noble.

The positive appropriation of Gaius Gracchus as a font for excellent samples of archaic Latin comes as a similar surprise to anyone not familiar with the literary tastes of the critics of the Antonine age.³² In fact, Gracchus’s *auctoritas* and his antiquity (*uetustas*)—the two are an indistinct distinction for Gellius—are such that Gracchus’s errors are no errors. Gellius describes as a sound critic Castricius the rhetoric expert and host

28. See Vardi 2001 on the bleak fate of unnamed (pseudo)experts in the *Noctes*.

29. See Freudenburg 2000.

30. See Marache 1952:226–27: Gellius, who detests neologisms in his own day, is drawn to authors who playfully invented words in a past age.

31. Such passages are illustrative of a disinterest in “history” more generally. See Holford-Strevens 1988:190.

32. Fronto also praises Gracchus. See Fronto, *Epistulae ad M. Caesarem et invicem* 3.17.3. Compare Holford-Strevens 1988:96 and 145. Marache 1952:73–74 notes some qualifications in Fronto’s praise. Russell 1990:1 notes that the periodization “Antonine” is artificial but nevertheless useful.

of a reading of Gracchus (*gravi atque firmo iudicio uirum*; 11.13.1). Gellius shortly describes Gracchus himself as famed and serious (*uiro inlustri et seuerio*; 11.13.4). One good man reads another. Gellius writes up his conclusions about both.

Gellius thrills to listen to and to memorize Gracchus's oratory *chez* Castricius. Castricius rereads a passage and corrects it without correcting it: perish the thought (*dii enim mentem meliorem mihi!* 11.13.10). A gentleman scholar observes proprieties when hosting the gentlemen of the past at his tables. Gracchus's wordplay might lead others astray, but Gracchus himself remains unimpeached. Few authors before Gellius can mention Gracchus without immediately launching into an attack on his political activities as being a threat to the Republic itself. For Gellius, Gracchus is a hero of republican Latinity.³³ Castricius is a hero of the art of reading that Latinity. Gracchus now poses a threat to the State of Latin only if one is oneself a bad citizen, that is, a bad reader.

Though this list of citations—a Gellian deluge of authorities leveraged to establish a matter of *usus* authoritatively—is itself hardly complete or exhaustive, it is clear that Gellius regularly authorizes his authorities. And although I have omitted several examples where a man is praised in simple military, political, or moral terms, there is a strong tendency toward turning all praise into praise of scholarship. “Good scholar” becomes a sort of shorthand for all the qualities that were once entailed in the designation “good man.” This substitution clearly benefits readers of the past like Gellius: it turns out that they are reading “themselves.” Conversely, Gellius's own scholarly credentials hint at broader virtues as well.

IV

Quem in modum disseruerit Fauorinus consultus a Gellio super officio iudicis.

I wish to make a case study of the treatment of judging and of the law in Gellius. The themes have broad resonances. Judgment is a fundamental activity both depicted within the text and evinced by it. In fact, judging Gellius and doing justice by him will be some of the last questions we will ask ourselves in this study as a whole. The world of good literary taste and discernment over which Gellius presides as author and in which he participates as a character runs smoothly only because it is governed by a set of

33. Marache 1952:299–302 offers a fairly negative portrait of Gracchus in Gellius. I would see in him instead a “lesser hero” and one who tends to pale by comparison with others.

informal and often unspoken laws that are regularly policed by prominent members of the community. In short, the law is a potent metaphor around which the potency of antiquarianism itself hovers.

When Gellius is appointed a judge, his reaction is to go first to the library to engage in antiquarian research: he seeks out books in Greek and Latin on the responsibilities of a judge (*de officio iudicis*; 14.2.1).³⁴ He needs books, so-called mute teachers (*mutis magistris*), to guide him. His reading teaches Gellius the rules of legal proceedings, and it gives him specific precedents on which to rely. Gellius, though, wants a more general theory of law that he can use to help him with ambiguous cases.³⁵

The ambiguous case with which Gellius is shortly confronted turns around a question of status, of authority even. There is a dispute over the repayment of a debt. One party claims the money was paid out, but he has no documentation or witnesses to that effect. He is, though, agreed to be a foursquare good man whose solid faith was known from prior experience and whose life was spotless: *sed eum constabat uirum esse firme bonum notaeque et expertae fidei et uitae inculpatissimae* (14.2.5). Thus, even as the fiscal account book is out of balance in this case, the man's moral ledger tallies because it is agreed to tally (*constat*).

Conversely, the second litigant is a scoundrel. His lifestyle is sordid. He has been caught out as a liar and a cheat in the past. Nevertheless, he and his counsel demand that the *uir firme bonus* produce the formal tokens of a contracted debt: receipts, a book of accounts, a signature, and so on. They further insist that the character of the parties is irrelevant to the case: this is a matter of the recovery of money being conducted before a private judge, not a trial of character before the censors (*rem enim de petenda pecunia apud iudicem priuatum agi, non apud censores de moribus*; 14.2.8).

The other judges, Gellius's friends (*amici mei*), vote that the bad man should be freed from the obligation to repay a debt that cannot be documented. Gellius implies that they are busy men and need to move on to their next important affair. That is, they seem to him to be overhasty in this case. Conversely, Gellius is paralyzed: as he contemplates the virtuous litigant, he cannot bring himself to decide in favor of a man who is reprehensible and whose life is utterly filthy and thoroughly infamous (*alterum probri plenum spurcissimaeque uitae ac defamatissimae*; 14.2.10). One notices, then, that the bad man has gotten worse: Gellius's characterization here is even more negative than was the portrait given earlier.

34. On this passage, see also Holford-Strevens 1988:218–20.

35. Ambiguity as a literary-critical problem in Gellius will be treated later.

Gellius's legal studies leave him in the lurch at this moment. He cannot even side with his friends here. So he postpones the case and rushes off to his friend and teacher Favorinus, the famed Greek orator from Gaul. Given the available wealth of tradition-minded legal expertise embodied by the *iurisconsulti* and their writings at Rome, it is striking to see Gellius turn to Favorinus.

Gellius says that Favorinus thinks that Gellius made a sensible decision. Favorinus praises Gellius's hesitation. He insists that there are big issues at stake here. But then Favorinus says that this is not the time and place to go through all the duties of a judge (*de omni officio iudicis*; 14.2.12). The duty of a judge, the very thing Gellius researched in the opening of this chapter, is a complex matter and needs, says Favorinus, careful treatment. Favorinus will, though, touch upon a few chief points, some *quaestionum capita*. The chapter heading (*capitulum*) of 14.2 reads, "How Favorinus discussed the duty of a judge when I asked him about it" (*Quem in modum disseruerit Fauorinus consultus a me super officio iudicis*). We have arrived at the chief point of the chapter, the *caput capitis*.³⁶ But we get only a peek at this capital question: the body of the chapter is all head and no body. That is, the *corpus* of the duty of a judge is too corpulent to fit within this chapter in Gellius's book/life. Instead, Favorinus can only give a "talking head" version of the matter to Gellius, and Gellius the same to us. In the end we will still have questions, *quaestiones*, left unanswered, even though Gellius the judge is herewith being offered the tools for making his own verdict.

Favorinus divides his impromptu *Book of Dutiful Judgment* into the following chapters: "Foreknowledge," "Amicable Dereliction of Duty," and "Partisan Questions." There is a supplemental chapter too: "Tipping Your Hand." I will not recapitulate the details of Favorinus's phrasing, but there is a certain irony in each of his capital inquiries. Should a judge prejudice? One wonders if this is really judgment. Should a judge act the part of a friend? In both instances the extrajudicial becomes part of the process of judgment. In each instance we entertain other modes of producing an authorized verdict, specifically modes that are liable to the invocation of *auctoritas* more generally at the expense of the rational arguments (*rationes*) contained within the case itself. There is a similar problem in the question

36. Compare the puns on *caput* in an effusive letter to Fronto from Marcus Aurelius. He reacts to reading Fronto's oration in an erotic/aesthetic frenzy of passion: *O si ad singula capita caput tu<u>m basiare possem!* (Fronto, *Epistulae ad M. Caesarem et invicem* 2.6.3). In Gellius's literary milieu, one plays explicitly with the ideas of text-as-body and body-as-text. For Fronto as a "sexy" author—and all that such a proposition might entail—see Richlin 2006.

of partisan questions. We are inquiring into judging, but this leads to a chapter on the inquiry into inquiry. And this is specifically an inquiry into what one might today call dishonest inquiry. However, Favorinus and Gellius are both inquiring into the ways in which honor and *honestas* can be preserved by means of recourse to such a line of questioning.

It would seem that Favorinus has long since tipped his hand in the case of the Case of the Judge. It certainly feels as if we are being encouraged to circumvent the narrow strictures of the legal process. The kinds of questions we ask and the lines we evidently delight in pursuing are a sign to the parties of where the judge wants to go. This is the thrust of the circumlocutions surrounding interlocution in 14.2.17. And what Favorinus says of the practice of judging we can ourselves judge to be his own preferred course in the here and now of the discussion of the theory of judging.

But, says Favorinus, we can go into detail when there is *otium*, when we have time for it (14.2.20). Think again of the *Noctes* as a whole. It is to be read at one's leisure, when we have the *otium*, after there is a cessation of the public business of business (*interstitione aliqua negotiorum*; pr. 1), as Gellius put it in the preface. And yet in our leisure we read that Gellius and Favorinus, busy, had not the leisure to get beyond the chapter heads of these issues. The preface, itself worried that we will judge ourselves in need of a shortcut to the *corpus* as a whole, gives us the headings of the material, the *capitula rerum*. And still we discover that in this Case of the Case the body is all head.

Favorinus makes an authoritative intervention as to how Gellius can cut to the heart of the specific case at hand: he should read a case by Cato, that most authoritative author and judge of all things Roman: *utare M. Catonis, prudentissimi uiri, consilio* (14.2.21). The summary of Cato's speech is striking. The *pro L. Turio* is delivered against one Gnaeus Gellius. Yes, Gellius, Cato was speaking to almost-you. Favorinus claims that Cato claimed that it was traditional for Romans of old to ask themselves who was the better man (*uir melior*) in a disputed case. Favorinus invokes a distant past that itself invokes a distant past. And yet this antiquarian precedent was already the present theory of Gellius. He came to Favorinus specifically because his reading of legal precedents cut against his preconceived theory that moral worth was worth more than the paper a debt was not written on: Gellius could not bring himself to vote against a *uir bonus*. And here Favorinus tells Gellius that Cato told a Gellius just such a thing. The *pro L. Turio* may have also been a *contra Cn. Gellium*, but it is at the same time a *pro A. Gellio*.

Gellius ends his report of Favorinus's account of judging. He thinks it a fitting account and one that becomes a philosopher: *ut uirum philosophum*

*decu*t (14.2.24). Gellius, though, hesitates. The advice is beyond him and his “middlingness”: it does not sit well with his age and *mediocritas*. Gellius, though censorious, does not want to actually play the censor and condemn someone for immorality.³⁷ Still, he cannot bring himself to release the bad man. Therefore, he swears that the case is “unclear” (*mihi non liquere*) and gets himself dismissed from the trial: *iudicatu illo solutus sum* (14.2.25). The case of the bad debt thus concludes with Gellius’s own acquittal. The only way he can properly acquit himself, he says, is to declare a hermeneutic impasse. *Non liquet*: the legal phrase is also a literary-critical one.

Not only, then, is Gellius sensitive to authority, to the authority of character, to the authority of Favorinus, to the authorization of the authority of character, but he also knows his own place in the universe of authorities. He is fit to judge lesser cases but not (yet) authorized to play the role of a Favorinus or a Cato and cast a public verdict on a life as a whole. Gellius does, of course, plead/recapitulate a case against the life of the bad claimant, but qua judge he decides not to decide. Of course, this is a species of decision. And the decision also implies an invitation to us to be judges as well, to judge the case of this case.

Let us play with *mediocritas* a bit. Naturally, there are those who will smirk: the mediocre writer at least knows himself for what he is.³⁸ At best this proposal can only be half right, though. Gellius’s principal role is to mediate, to serve as a medium through which the verdicts of the past and the judgments of the present can travel. He is a mean between authoritative extremes. His is a gilt if not golden mean inasmuch as each extreme is itself excellent. The reader, who is also perhaps young and/or perhaps not (yet) great, sits in an analogous position. The authoritative past passes though the reader, who, even if a specific case may not be entirely clear, will nevertheless appreciate the capital points of judging: the authoritative virtue of the past is a thing it would be unphilosophical to ignore in the present. When Gellius leaves his reader in a position analogous to his own, he therewith invites this reader to read and judge as he did. Is this clear? *Hoc tibi liquet?*

37. See Marache 1952:274 on Gellius’s fascination with the censorship in his researches.

38. Or is he a *Cicero alter*? Compare the faux modesty of Cicero, *Philippica* 2.2: *Non uideo nec in uita nec in gratia nec in rebus gestis nec in hac mea mediocritate ingeni quid despicere possit Antonius*. This same passage of Cicero is used by Quintilian to discuss the rhetoric of modesty (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.1.25).

V

Cuiusmodi sit lex apud eruditos de legibus percontandi disserendique; et quae sit eius legis reprehensio.

Gellius's intellectual commitments lead him regularly to explore the antiquarian aspects of the juridical.³⁹ He does not, though, usually examine the juridical aspects of antiquarianism.⁴⁰ However, Gellius's own preface did end on a legal note. Gellius reiterated as the law of reading his own text a law he said he would take on loan from Aristophanes (*mutuabor*; pr. 20). Unlike the case of 14.2 above, we are the witnesses, the *commentarii* themselves are the public records of the transaction, and Gellius is the signatory to them. Before we worried about the law of entrusted money (*credita pecunia*), but here we need to explore the law governing the borrowing of a law. It is not regular for something taken out on loan, for something *mutuus*, to pass between the two parties without their mutual consent. Does, then, Aristophanes consent to the deal? Will the law be returned in the end? Will interest be paid?

Might not the relationship to Aristophanes be better described as one involving the distinction between *usurpatio* and *usucapio*? We literary critics are summoned as judges of the case. *Usurpatio* is taking possession of property to which one has no legal title.⁴¹ *Usucapio* is the acquisition of ownership rights by virtue of uninterrupted possession. Or maybe Gellius is a *usufructuarius*, a man entitled to enjoy both the use of something of which he is not the owner and the profits from it. This puts the question of "use" from the preface in a different light. Gellius makes use of Aristophanes, but the law he cites as the law of reading is itself described as falling under the heading (*caput* again) of the law of debts. Property law is relevant. The pertinent chapters of the law books are those dedicated to *usus*. Use can be usurped. Use can become ownership merely through its own continuation. Or use can be the sanctioned use of another's property without the implication that ownership rights will ultimately change hands.

The antiquarian uses the books of others. He makes them into the substance of his own books. The fruits, the *fructus*, of this use accrue doubly:

39. See Holford-Strevens 1988:223.

40. Compare Lysias, *Against Theomnestus* 1: as the jury looks on, the speaker educates his opponent Theomnestus in the philology of law. Appreciating the value of the spirit of the law will prevent the kind of sophistical tricks that Theomnestus uses relative to its letter. The antiquarian investigation of Solon's laws (§§15–20) will teach us how to be good legal subjects and good judges.

41. Compare Fronto's advice about adopting old words as a species of *usurpatio*. Fronto, *Ad Antoninum de orationibus* 18.

the authority of the ancient author waxes in measure with his iterated citation. But the antiquarian siphons off some measure of the other's authority as a means of demonstrating the authoritative quality of his own account of authority. More footnotes are better. A longer bibliography bespeaks a more authoritative account of a subject. Gellius's use of snippets of others' books comprises the substance of his own stock, his *penus*. Where everything is on loan, the law of borrowing itself is fittingly on loan as well.

But then the question arises as to whether what at first seemed mere usufruct does not drift into *usucapio*. Aristophanes has long since ceased to make use of his own literary property. He died. His works were left to his heirs, that is, to any who can successfully appropriate them. The use of this literary *corpus* passed into the hands of the erudite ages ago.

As is clear from the special case of Aristophanes' law, though, the antiquarian specifically appropriates the authority of the past in conjunction with the words themselves. The use of authority and the authority of use converge. The loan and the interest on the loan do not, though, clearly return to the owner of the original capital. Instead, use of the stock of antiquity transfers over to the antiquarian both the profit from that stock and, in some measure, the original substance itself.

VI

Quid sit homo bene eruditus et quid a homine grammatico differat. Quibus uerbis "penus" definita sit.

I herewith provide a second and related meditation on the authority of property and the property of authority. The term *penus* plays an axial role in both the form and the content of Gellius's text. The word appears on two occasions, once in the preface as a description of the *Noctes* as a whole and once in a discussion of the meaning of the word *penus* (4.1).⁴² We have already been put to the test without knowing it: the *Noctes* is a *penus*, but unless we have read the *penus* that is the *Noctes*, we may well not know just what we are holding in our hands and the irony that these stores have in store for us.

One day a crowd of citizens of every station was standing in the vestibule of Caesar's Palatine home waiting to pay their morning respects to the emperor. The image is a pregnant one: on Caesar's threshold, paying him

42. Henry 1994:1924–25 sees the *penus* discussion that opens book 4 as a guide to some of the major motifs of the remainder of the fourth book.

our respects, philology.⁴³ Gellius pans in from the long shot of the crowd to a medium view of a subset of them, and then he zooms to a close-up: “And there in a circle of learned men—Favorinus the philosopher was there too—some Mr. Moneybags of the grammar game was showing off certain trifles concerning the genders and cases of words. His dissertation was delivered with brows raised high, a studied majesty on his face: you’d think he was an expounder and arbiter of the Sibylline oracles.”⁴⁴ The initial portrait is hardly flattering. The string of snide and dismissive characterizations prepares us for the thrashing of this impostor of erudition. Our philosophical friend Favorinus will commence teaching the grammar teacher a lesson in the very next sentence. The *grammaticus* looks over at Favorinus, unaware of whom he addresses, and says that *penus* too has various genders and various declensions.⁴⁵ The anonymous teacher then trots out his examples from the ancients: *hoc penus, haec penus, huius peni, penoris*. His stores include a provision of examples of the variety of grammatical categories into which the word “provisions” falls.

“He was making a great din with testimonials and examples for all these things, and while he was most odiously blathering, Favorinus calmly interceded.”⁴⁶ Gellius the author focalizes an implied Gellius the character focused on Favorinus. The narrative begs a certain kind of response of the reader: strong identification with the pleasure of watching Favorinus demolish a pedant. And even though Gellius himself draws from his own stores a variety of tales about varied genders and cases for words, we nevertheless are to see in him not an anonymous schoolman but instead a follower at a distance of Favorinus. We are to see the same in ourselves. The uncanny double that is the unnamed teacher will be killed off so that we can admire Favorinus.

Polite and sarcastic—the two modes are routinely joined in the *Noctes*—Favorinus “intercedes.” He exercises his tribunician power to put an end to the bill of goods being promulgated by this would-be *senator uerborum*.

43. More philology still: “vestibule” (*uestibulum*) itself is an object of antiquarian research. See 16.5: “*Vestibulum*” *quid significet; deque eius uocabuli rationibus*. The whole work is recursive: To learn A requires learning B and C. To learn B requires learning D and E . . .

44. *atque ibi in circulo doctorum hominum Fauorino philosopho praesente ostentabat quispiam grammaticae rei ditior scholica quaedam nugalia de generibus et casibus uocabulorum disserens cum arduis superciliis uocisque et uultus grauitate composita tamquam interpres et arbiter Sibyllae oraculorum* (4.1.1).

45. An additional irony: Favorinus’s own gender is ambiguous.

46. *Atque horum omnium et testimoniis et exemplis constrepebat; cumque nimis odiose blatiaret, intercessit placide Fauorinus* (4.1.4).

That is, one notes the political dimension of Favorinus's gesture whereby Gellius has him saying "no" before he even begins speaking. The salient point of evoking the subtext of *intercessit*, though, is to recall that we are in the vestibule of Caesar, about to say our good morning to him. Caesar is the only one who possesses "real" tribunician power, the only one who can actually veto anything. And yet on his doorstep the politics of erudition is being wielded in the republic of the learned.⁴⁷ The circle of the erudite recalls, then, nothing so much as the *circuli* of the old forum, hotbeds of political activity in the centuries preceding the principate.⁴⁸ And yet this republic of letters is already shaping up to be something of a principate: Favorinus here plays first among equals. Gellius evinces a strong tendency to have only one such leading figure per chapter.

On with the politesse and the sarcasm proper, though: "Please, Professor What's-Yer-Name, . . ." ⁴⁹ Favorinus makes his first inquiry, and the "Socratic method" advertised in the lemma has arrived. Of course, this is Socratic elenchus become philological one-upmanship. If Socrates was wise to know that he didn't know anything, the new wisdom is to take pride in one's vast stores of detailed knowledge.

Favorinus demands to know what the word *penus* actually means. Being able to slot it into a sentence in a morphologically correct manner is not good enough for us. It would be a shame to use this everyday word for everyday things incorrectly, like someone who learned to speak Latin in the slave market (*in uenalibus*, 4.1.6). We would no more want our precious Latin stores to be cheap junk for sale than we would wish the same of our very selves.

The *magister* walks right into the trap, like so many others in the *Noctes*. He scoffs at how simple the task is and trots off a list of items: a *penus* is wine, wheat, oil, lentils, beans, and other things of this sort. Favorinus then asks about other items: is it millet too? acorns? barley? His interlocutor hesitates. Favorinus presses on. The teacher can stop worrying about examples. Favorinus does not want items of the species; he is interested in hearing a definition of the *genus* and then hearing about the differences it embraces: *Sed potesne mihi non speciem aliquam de penu dicere, sed definire*

47. Compare the way the politics of authoritative precedent is evoked in Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.5.10: "Whoa now! Do you want to strip these most learned men, men whom Cicero and Varro pride themselves on following, of the right to vote in the Senate of Words? (*et heus tu hisne tam doctis uiris, quorum M. Cicero et Varro imitatores se gloriantur, adimere uis in uerborum comitiis ius suffragandi?*)"

48. See O'Neil 2003. These learned circles reappear in Gellius at 15.9.3 and 16.10.3.

49. "*amabo*," inquit "*magister, quicquid est nomen tibi*." (4.1.4).

genere proposito et differentiis adpositis, quid sit "penus"? (14.1.9). In short, the terms are philosophical, the issue philological.⁵⁰

The grammarian is flummoxed: he says he does not understand what Favorinus means with this talk of "genus" and "species." The teacher is now taken to school. Favorinus has to quickly teach him the ABCs of elementary logic and the shape of a proper definition. For example, a definition of "man" would be not "you" and "me" but rather "an animal capable of reason and knowing (*scientiae capiens*)" or something like that. Though canonical as a logician's example, the example is also no mere example in this antiquarian setting.⁵¹ Despite his reliance on *ratio* in his capacity as a *grammaticus*, is the teacher nevertheless capable of really knowing anything? Is he himself *scientiae capiens*?

The rudiments thus covered, the question returns: can you define a *penus*? The proud character of the chapter's opening is transformed. "That show-off said in a soft and humble voice, 'I have not learned philosophy, nor did I seek to learn it.'" ⁵² Gellius invites us to smirk at the changed demeanor. The teacher nevertheless claims that it makes no difference if he is unable to define differences in this manner. He is not for that reason ignorant of other literary knowledge (*alias litteras*).

Favorinus grins one of the endless and endlessly cruel grins of the *Noctes*. "'Knowing what a *penus* is,' said Favorinus, now smiling, 'is no more a matter of our philosophy than of your grammar. For I recall, I believe, that one used to inquire whether Vergil said *penum struere longam* or *longo ordine*. Of course, you know that both readings are currently found.'" ⁵³ Favorinus savors the taste of his own condescension. The philosopher is also a philologist. The authority of wisdom and the authority of authorized

50. Compare and contrast the (ironic) juxtaposition of philology and the philosophy of genus and species in Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 58, and also the philological/philosophical sequel in *Epistulae morales* 59. Trotting out one's notes from Philosophy 101 is a tried-and-true move among the lettered crowd. Note: the game could have been played otherwise. Quintilian, in *Institutio oratoria* 7.3.13, fuses antiquarianism and oratory: *opus est aliquando finitione obscurioribus et ignotioribus uerbis: quid sit clarigatio, erc-tum citum, interim notis nomine [uidebis]: quid sit penus, quid litus*. Quintilian does note, though, that this sort of thing can seem to be unduly philosophical rather than rhetorical.

51. Compare Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 5.10.55–57 and 7.3.15. Both times Quintilian uses *animal mortale rationale*. That is, *scientia*, or knowledge, is omitted.

52. *Tum ille ostentator uoce iam molli atque demissa: "philosophias" inquit "ego non didici neque discere adpetui et, si ignoro, an hordeum ex 'penu' sit aut quibus uerbis 'penus' definiatur, non ea re litteras quoque alias nescio"* (4.1.13).

53. "Scire," inquit ridens iam Favorinus, "quid 'penus' sit, non ex nostra magis est philosophia quam ex grammatica tua. Meministi enim, credo, quaeri solitum, quid Vergilius dixerit, 'penum struere' uel 'longam' uel 'longo ordine.' utrumque enim profecto scis legi solitum" (4.1.14–15).

readings are one and the same. They are, by definition, different members of the same well-bred *genus*. A man capable of reason is also thereby also capable of knowledge. This is again by definition. To know the definition of a definition is to possess both kinds of authority. It is also to be able to set forth in long order one's expansive stores, *penum struere longam* or *longo ordine*. Both activities are concurrently found.

Favorinus next offers the pitiful so-called teacher the faint consolation that the so-called sage Quintus Scaevola botched the definition of *penu*s as well. Favorinus dips into his stores of erudition to pull out a bad lentil for our perverse delectation in the face of another's failure. We ourselves smile at the odious blathering of that gauche sage Scaevola. Unfortunately there are textual problems in the *Noctes* at this point. Our own philological wisdom can give us the general sense, though.

Favorinus closes with a zinger. He says he also learned such philological minutiae even as he studied philosophy. "Since for a Roman citizen speaking Latin it is no less base to call a thing by the wrong word than it is to call a man by the wrong name" (*quoniam ciuibus Romanis Latine loquentibus rem non <suo> uocabulo demonstrare non minus turpe est, quam hominem non suo nomine appellare*; 14.1.18). The point is political and sociological even as Favorinus elevates it to a quasi-philosophical status. And of course, philosophical standing and philological standing are parallel conditions. There is slave Latin and citizen Latin. The earlier point about the *uenalis* returns with a vengeance. One's standing in the republic of Latin is readily diagnosed by one's relationship to Latin itself. There are slave and free, proletarians and magisterial magistrates. Ironically the unnamed *magister* who was holding forth on Caesar's doorstep is no authority at all. Instead, Favorinus, an effete Gaul no less, turns out to be the philosopher-king of the Latin Republic of Words. And Favorinus imposes a rather striking law of the land: every word (*uocabulum*) is a proper name (*nomen*). Philosophy and philology are rational sciences of identity that double as sovereign political sciences.

In the final sections of the chapter Gellius draws back for an overview. This particular incident was but a specimen of the kind (*genus*) of thing Favorinus would do: "In this manner Favorinus would lead ordinary conversations of this sort (*id genus*) away from dreary and unimportant matters toward those things that were more useful (*utile*) to hear and to learn. They were not imported from without nor imposed for the sake of show, but they were innate to and received from the very issue itself."⁵⁴ If

54. *Sic Fauorinus sermones id genus communes a rebus paruis et frigidis abducebat ad ea, quae magis utile esset audire ac discere, non allata extrinsecus, non per ostentationem, sed indidem nata acceptaque* (4.1.19).

the *magister* did not know what a *genus* was in the specific case of *penus*, he could never appreciate that his humiliation was but a moment in a more general *genus*. When use arises, Gellius can draw from his stores the story of the usefulness of the story of the *penus*. Gellius likewise himself imposes a philosophical perspective vis-à-vis the episode as a whole: this was its *genus*; do not be distracted by the *species*. Similarly, the method is the message: the conversation Favorinus sired came from good stock (*genus*): it was native to the community of that specific conversation (*communis* + *sermo*). His remarks were born citizens in good standing, leading citizens even and firsts among equals of their same rank. Despite/because of the Socratic method, the resulting talk was not that of a foreign slave, but that of a true Roman citizen speaking authoritative Latin, for *Latine* means, as any good philologist will tell you, not just “in Latin,” but “in good Latin.”⁵⁵

Genres (*genera*) and their distinctions (*differentia*) are both the seeds and the fruits of knowledge and wisdom. “[T]he grammarian, as a man of regular speech, was fundamentally a man of distinctions. Grammar defines and separates: *grammatica diuidit*. As a distillation of the grammarian’s expertise, the phrase could not be better, and the definition applies both to the effects of grammar on the language and to its social consequences, distinguishing the educated man from the masses.”⁵⁶ And yet there are important distinctions to be made between a grammarian and a philosopher and between a teacher and an antiquarian. *Auctoritas diuidit*: authority divides and separates. The *Noctes* itself both performs and stages prior performances of this process.

VII

Obscuritates non adsignemus culpae scribentium, sed inscitiae non adsequentium.

We have just explored the authoritative take on the question of the *penus* and the authority of the text-as-*penus* that records this discussion. But there was an additional authority present in the passage: Caesar. The chatter of the bookish set was nothing but a prelude to an interview with the

55. I add a footnote on the note that Gellius adds to this chapter. Gellius’s supplement is to write in addition (*adscribendum*) the writings of Servius Sulpicius in his work *Chapters of Scaevola Reproached* (*Reprehensis Scaeuolae capitibus*). Sulpicius writes, writes Gellius, that Aelius Catus decreed (*placuisse*, read politically) that . . . But Masurius Sabinus in book 2 of his *Civil Law* said that . . . But what does any of this have to do with Favorinus and his reproaches? The genre of the footnote not infrequently sires a seeming (real?) heterogeneity.

56. Kaster 1988:19. Bourdieu 1984 allows one to appreciate the full ramifications of Kaster’s position.

emperor.⁵⁷ About to pay the civil authority their respects, the erudite pay their respects to bookish authority.

The opening of the twentieth book is staged in the same setting as the first chapter of the fourth. After a one-sentence introduction of Sextus Caecilius and his knowledge of the law, one reads that Favorinus approached him as “we” were waiting near the palace to pay our morning respects to Caesar (20.1.2). The encounter and the discussion of law are pointedly public (*nobis multisque aliis praesentibus*; 20.1.2). The conversation and the chapter end amid applause for Caecilius’s performance as it is announced that Caesar is presently receiving greetings (20.1.55).

The story of law, then, is also the story of waiting for Caesar. The discussion is provoked by Caecilius’s praise of those most antique and antiquarian of laws, the Twelve Tables. Erected in 451–450 BCE, these laws were already old even for an “ancient” author like Cato. Caecilius the Jurist swiftly and gladly transforms himself into Caecilius the Antiquarian when Favorinus speaks of the obscurity of the Twelve Tables. One should attribute the obscurity, claims Caecilius, not to the defects of the authors of the laws but to the ignorance of those who cannot follow/comprehend them (“*Obscuritates*” inquit Sex. Caecilius “*non adsignemus culpaē scribentium, sed inscitiae non adsequentium*”; 20.1.5). The obscurity of the laws is to be assigned to the ignorance of the people who do not “catch up with, equal, rival, successfully carry out, or mentally grasp (*adsequi*)” them. The good legal subject is the good reader of old texts. Antiquarianism provides a solid foundation in civics.

Caecilius’s sentence has yet to finish. He has no sooner declared the ignorant guilty than he lets them off the hook: it turns out if the authors of the laws are not guilty, neither are the bad readers (*culpa uacent*). The long course of time has “obliterated” the ancient words and customs that encompass the true sense of the laws: *Nam longa aetas uerba atque mores ueteres obliterauit, quibus uerbis moribusque sententia legum comprehensa est* (20.1.6). The word *oblitterare* is doubled within itself. *Oblitterare* means both to forget and to efface. Its etymology points to *obliuio*, or forgetting, but phonology and use let it blend with *litterae*, letters or literature.⁵⁸ To not remember merges with to delete. However, traces remain. Philology can recover the original and authoritative inscription.⁵⁹

57. Probably Antoninus Pius. Gellius offers no cues to a specific date. The scene is “timeless” in more than one sense of the word.

58. OLD, s.v. *oblittero* c.

59. And the *Noctes* itself, you will recall, is the derivative inscription of that most (un)authoritative and (un)original author Aulus Gellius. The *Noctes* was to be to hand when creeping oblivion had seized him (pr. 2).

In the *Noctes* laws are particularly liable to forgetting/erasure. Sulla replaced/rewrote a faded sumptuary law (2.24.11). Draco's laws are allowed to fade away by the "silent and unwritten consent of the Athenians (*tacito inlitteratoque Atheniensium consensu*)" (11.18.5). The unwritten unwrites with the silent consent of illiteracy. Let's make a bit of erudite noise about this. One notes, then, that *illiterato* is here used in a rare "etymological" sense. A well-read reader will appreciate that the word almost always means "ill-read," only very rarely "illiterate."

Similarly, the unspoken unwrites in 12.13.5, where laws again lose their meanings: *consensu tacito oblitterantur*. This same legal association is also leveraged in a metaphorical passage: the fundamental elements of filial piety are effaced and abolished when children are handed over to wet nurses (*oblitteratis et abolitis natiuae pietatis elementis*; 12.1.23). The breast-feeding chapter is reaching a political crescendo.

Books themselves are liable to this same sort of erasure. In their case, though, the forgetting is willful, and the fading bespeaks a sort of violence. Gellius has seen manuscripts of Quadrigarius where the genitive singular of *facies* was written *faciei* instead of as *facies* (9.14.2). These are "corrupt books," *corruptos libros*. What had been written before, the original *facies*, was effaced (*oblitterato*). Instead, *faciei* has been written in its place in accordance with *ratio grammatica*, the pedantic and overlogical rules of the despised grammarians. The authoritative reading has been made to disappear. The old authoritative law of Latin has been supplanted by a new logic of declension. To decline thus is truly to decline: we find, that is, a sad pun in *declinavit*. One once declined thus, but in the decay of the language, new laws of declension have obliterated the old ones. Only a zealous antiquarian can read the traces of the old face of *facies*.

Back, then, to Sextus Caecilius. Laws have faded. They need to be read and ratified all over again. The ignorance of readers has written over the original text and supplanted it with new and/or incomprehensible meanings. The authoritative intentions of ancient legal authority need to be recovered by the legal scholar as antiquarian and codicologist.

Caecilius challenges Favorinus to tell him what is wrong with the Laws of the Twelve Tables. Caecilius then lists the easily defended laws such as the death penalty for judges who take bribes. Favorinus not surprisingly asks to hear more about the less immediately sympathetic laws, such as the requirement that a sick man summoned to court must appear and that he cannot be taken to court in a wagon but rather must travel on the back of a beast of burden (20.1.11). The fine for injuring another was originally set at 25 *asses*, and so, say the legal commentators, at a later date a certain rogue

ran around slapping people, and he would have his slave pay the fine on the spot (20.1.13). Inflation had turned it into a pittance. Favorinus also brings up the logical problems of the tit-for-tat law of reprisal (*talio*) (20.1.15).

Caecilius throws his arms around Favorinus at this point (20.1.20): he has found a kindred spirit. He asks Favorinus to set aside the academic games and to have a real, serious discussion about law (*consideres grauius*). There is no reason to scorn the laws' eld (*antiquitates legum*). An educated rereading of them ensues. The original but forgotten and effaced meaning of these provisions is revealed to be a still-valid authority on how one ought to live, even if they no longer are legally valid. It's nigh unto a law in the *Noctes*: antiquity must be taken seriously and never scorned. Accordingly, the *antiquitates legum* are natural candidates for particular reverence.

Favorinus, argues Caecilius, does not know how to read the laws. A sick man on a donkey is not what the law is talking about. In the Latin of that age *morbus* meant unwell, not gravely ill. A debilitating sickness was *amorbis sonticus* (20.1.27). Moreover, a *iumentum* was not a pack animal but rather an animal that one might yoke (*iungere*). Therefore, a frail man might in fact be taken to court in a wagon according to the law.

Caecilius uses related techniques to offer a point-by-point rebuttal of Favorinus. Further research would have taught Favorinus that the fines were variable and that even twenty-five *asses* was once inconvenient. The attack on the law of retribution was sophistical, but a close look at the real spirit of it reveals a different face written beneath the ratiocinations Favorinus imposed upon it. Brought before the bar by Favorinus, the law's self-appointed advocate is eloquent in its defense.

And antiquarianism is the chief tool with which Caecilius crafts his case. Caecilius lays his hands on the details of legal history to vindicate the past, to champion it (*uindicare*) and to lay claim to it (*uindicare*) in the name of the present. He does so by chastising (*uindicare*) those who do not know how to read the old laws. The whole operation turns around the "old" and the "new" meanings of *uindicare*, a word that appears both within the quoted laws (20.1.45) and outside them (20.1.10; 20.1.32).

The spirit of the argument is a rescue operation, but the letter of it is a chastisement. "Vindication" is always punitive except when it appears in the quoted law. *Vindicare* as punishment is in fact the usual use throughout the *Noctes*.⁶⁰ At 20.1.45, though, the law allows the creditor to seize and enchain his debtor "unless judgment goes in his favor or unless someone stands surety (*uindicit*) for him in the case."⁶¹ Outside the quoted law

60. For example, at 20.1.10 Favorinus associates *uindicare* with punishment (*poena*).

uindicare never has its old and original sense. My metaphorical reading in the preceding paragraph is thus not supported by the concrete use of the word even though my reading is “more antique.” Nevertheless, in the name of this same antiquity I am ready to declare that the cruel contest of knowing chastises the word-poor, and that it does so in the name of rescuing knowledge itself.

I am arguing, then, that on a more general level Caecilius is not just researching legal history. He is also standing surety for the authority of the Laws of the Twelve Tables. Their credit is no longer any good. They have been hauled into court by Favorinus. The antiquarian legal scholar lays his hands on them, the action proper to a *uindex*, and pledges that his own stores of erudition guarantee either that the case should be decided in favor of the laws themselves—they owe nothing—or that Caecilius’s authoritative (re)reading of the laws will allow his word to substitute for what we think we see when we read those same words. The question, then, of whether Caecilius “got it right” is less important than the issue of whether we will let his reading “vindicate” the law.

We are back in the world of authorized judging from 14.2. Will we accept his philology as an in-kind payment that is as good as cash? And whence the value of philology? Is it precious because it is true or because it is authoritative? The two are ideally not distinct, but they can be. And the scholar is a man of distinctions. Moreover, we can also observe a converse logic of vindication throughout the antiquarian enterprise. Antiquarianism itself extends an infinite line of credit to scholars. The institution can always stand surety for them when they engage in their punishing appropriation of the past with which they abuse both outsiders and one another. Individual players may win or lose, but the game itself always wins.⁶²

The same, all over again: What kind of credit do I have? Are you satisfied with my stores of erudition? Will I be allowed to substitute your casual understanding of vindication for my antiquarian rereading of Gellius? Or will you feel called upon to write up and to correct, as did Gellius, the sad case of Vindex, a man who made an ugly error in his *Notebooks of Ancient Readings*?⁶³ To the extent that I am or am not extended credit or granted authority in this case, you are most likely to call upon your own erudition in order to render a judgment. The Case of the Case of the Law, the

61. *Ni iudicatum facit aut quis endo eo in iure uindicat, secum ducito, uincito aut neruo aut compedibus* (20.1.45).

62. See Bourdieu 1991:58.

63. 6.2.1 opens: *Turpe erratum offendimus in illis celebratissimis Commentariis Lectionum Antiquarum Caeselli Vindictis*.

Account of the Accountancy of the Law, and Learning Philological Learning converge. My dissertation ends; perhaps the audience approves. In any case, Caesar is now receiving guests.

VIII

Quid sit "municipium" et quid a "colonia" differat; et quid sint "municipes" quaeque sit eius uocabuli ratio ac proprietas; atque inibi, quod diuus Hadrianus in senatu de iure atque uocabulo municipum uerba fecit.

The two preceding discussions have both been bracketed by Caesar. We awaited his arrival as we discussed the store of words and fed ourselves from our erudite provender. We awaited his arrival as we worked our way through the authoritative commentary on the authority of ancient laws. But now it is time to enter his palace, to attempt to gaze directly on the face of Caesar, to ask how his various forms of authority respond to the salutations of the antiquarians.

For a man living around 170 CE, there are many Caesars from which to choose, of course: twenty or so, depending on how one counts and when exactly Gellius is writing. Gellius is, though, relatively uninterested in the vast majority of them. Some merit no mention at all; others appear indirectly, as when we hear of Trajan's forum or how Claudius extended the *pomerium* of Rome in a chapter discussing what a *pomerium* is.⁶⁴ In general there is a fairly weak sense of "imperial politics" or "the empire" in Gellius. In fact, the traumatic transition between republic and empire and the tumultuous last generation of the republic are almost totally unrepresented. The border between the periods feels relatively indistinct. If Tacitus notes that when Tiberius became emperor there were few alive who could recall the republic, then Gellius is of a generation who can hardly recall that there was something to recall.⁶⁵ They lay claim to the republic without championing it: they are *uindices* who appropriate the past-as-object while never championing the spirit of the age(s) from which those precious stores are accumulated.

64. Gellius passes up the opportunity to speak of the antiquarian emperor Claudius qua antiquarian. Perhaps Claudius's reputation as a buffoon—and his antiquarian pursuits remain to this day an element of this reputation—steered Gellius away. But this is, in its own way, a self-refuting thesis: Gellius does not think antiquarianism to be silly, and if he finds a bad antiquarian, he delights in correcting him. A more general indifference to authors and works of that period is the likely root cause.

65. See Holford-Strevens 1988:179 on Gellius's nonhistorical readings of historians. See also Holford-Strevens 1988:190 on Gellius's indifference to the politics of the triumviral question, etc.: the republic is instead just a trove of laws and practices.

Caesar's authority is felt within the *Noctes*. It is felt most specifically as antiquarian authority. The politics of Caesar, a political politics that is generally effaced from the historical dimension of the text, reappears as the politics of knowledge.⁶⁶ In fact, all politics are gladly assimilated to knowledge politics. The disputes in the vestibule of Caesar are therefore a fitting prologue to looking at the role played more generally by Caesar in the *Noctes*.

Hadrian is afforded an unusually large swathe of text in the *Noctes*. He earns the distinction for having delivered an antiquarian speech to the senate. What is a *municipium*, and how does it differ from a *colonia*? The lemma of 16.13 asks a question perfectly representative of Gellius's own interests throughout the *Noctes*. The chapter begins with an air of knowing satisfaction: everyone uses the words *municipes* and *municipia*, and nobody who uses them isn't convinced but that he knows what he is talking about (16.13.1). But what one says they are and what they in fact are are two different things. How few of us, Gellius asks, though from a colony do not call ourselves a *municeps* and our fellows *municipes* even though this is totally wrong (16.13.2)? Gellius continues with this "we" in the next sentence: we are ignorant of what the real legal standing of a *municipium* is and how it differs from a *colonia* (16.13.3). Though we are from colonies, we use "municipal" language. Ignorant of our language and the legal underpinnings of that language, we remain strangers to ourselves and our fellow citizens despite everyone's confidence to the contrary.

Hadrian gave a speech in the senate that addressed the errors of this widespread belief. The speech was called *On the Italians*, and Hadrian himself was of Italian origin. The speech is a masterful dissertation: *peritissime disseruit* (16.13.4). The language aligns the emperor with Favorinus, Taurus, and the erudite heroes of the *Noctes*. Throughout the *Noctes* the lemmata routinely trumpet the *dissertationes* that await us within the main body of the text. The authority of Hadrian's discourse is thus flagged by Gellius as the authority of a savant, of the hegemonic efficacy of a fine antiquarian argument carefully made. Though one might usually say of a speech before the senate that the art of persuasion and the social standing of the speaker were central to any reception of the oration by the audience, here we have Professor Hadrian lecturing authoritatively to the class of senators. The

66. Compare Fronto, *Ad Verum* 2.1: eloquence, he tells the emperor, is the "true *imperator* of the human race" (2.1.9), and only the first *imperatores*, Julius Caesar, the emperor who was not yet an emperor, and Augustus, the first emperor who was also the second, were genuinely good speakers. Julius's oratory was *imperatoria*. But things were already declining with Augustus, and he had only a sort of leftover eloquence (2.1.10).

hegemonic role played by eloquence and station have been eclipsed by the sway of learned argumentation. Hadrian has not been studying his Quintilian; he has been poring over his Varro.

Hadrian reveals the old meaning of words and exposes the etymology of *municipium*. Though one could speak here of the rhetoric of learning, the trope of a return to origins, and the politics of reading the past, Gellius encourages us only to see the unassailable *ratio* of etymology and to recognize a legal truth that has been forgotten/effaced, that is, *oblitteratum*. A generally deprecated mode, *ratio*, is here accepted. A nobody grammarian is generally shot down when he makes such an appeal. But the *auctoritas* of the emperor when combined with the *ratio* of etymology and accompanied by an appeal to ancient *usus* produces an expert dissertation on the meaning of a word. Hadrian's synthesis of scholarly modes is masterful.

Hadrian's argument states that the *municipia* are "separate but equal," that they have their own rights and laws. Meanwhile, *coloniae* are offshoots of the main Roman stalk (*quasi propagatae sunt*; 16.13.8) and thus are not *sui arbitrii*, but rather are bound by Roman laws and institutions. In the final section of the chapter, Gellius offers us reflections on the stakes of the distinction: is it better to be in the one condition or the other? The *colonia* are considered, Gellius says, to be preferable and superior:

Quae tamen condicio, cum sit magis obnoxia et minus libera, potior tamen et praestabilior existimatur propter amplitudinem maiestatemque populi Romani, cuius istae coloniae quasi effigies paruae simulacraque esse quaedam uidentur, et simul quia obscura oblitterataque sunt municipiorum iura, quibus uti iam per ignotitiam non queunt.

Nevertheless, this status, though it is more beholden and less free, is still considered to be preferable and superior on account of the greatness and majesty of the Roman people: these colonies seem to be like so many little copies and likenesses of it. Also the rights (*iura*) of the municipal towns are obscure and effaced (*oblitterata*), and they cannot make use of them because they are unknown.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 16.13.9

Who says this again? Is this Gellius's voice? Is it Hadrian's? Who "considers" such to be the case: *existimatur* is impersonal; it corresponds neither to Gellius nor to Hadrian, but it can be the report of a general sentiment that originates from either party if not both. The chapter closes with worldly and political rumination on the consequences of the distinction between

two words that were in need of an antiquarian commentary. But it is not clear which antiquarian is speaking to us here. Is Hadrian telling us that we may well have our own rights and laws, but that we do not really want to live under them? Or is this Gellius's point? In effect, it is nobody's point: it is a thoroughly unattributed and unattributable "estimation."

Going back to the opening of the chapter, then: Gellius said that "we" were colonists who out of ignorance routinely called ourselves municipals. Now "we" are in a position to recognize that we are beautiful copies of a glorious and majestic original. We are bound by the rights and privileges of that original. But this is for the best. Were we instead actually municipals and in our own power, *sui iuris*, we would not really be in our own power, for we would remain confused in the face of the obscurity of our own privileges.

The "politics" of this antiquarian proposition is striking. It is best to be a copy of Hadrian, to copy out his majestic antiquarian dissertation. Gellius's text is the little *simulacrum* and the copy of that original. Though less free and more beholden to the system in general, this condition is still preferable to being a "municipal" like Hadrian himself. A municipal might have his own rights, but they are lost because the state itself has not recaptured them via antiquarian research into those rights. And yet Hadrian can conduct and has in fact conducted just such a course of research. The fruit of the emperor's labors, though, is a dissertation whose thesis is that only an emperor is appropriately positioned to seize possession of himself and his own rights by means of the power of antiquarianism. He is the only preauthorized authority who suitably pursues the recovery of effaced laws. The diction and imagery recall the discourse of Caecilius in the vestibule of Caesar. Meanwhile, Gellius is best suited to copying out in smaller scale the text of the same dissertation. Some researchers are giants; others appropriately stand in their shadows. And for the latter, life in the shadows is a perfectly agreeable condition.

If there is, then, a will to power in philological research, we also find a concurrent will to un-power. One can perhaps see in Caecilius's vindication of the Twelve Tables and fight against their obliteration an instance of the former. A clearer example of the same is provided by Hadrian himself. Worldly authority is embodied by the emperor. And when it is translated into the domain of knowledge, the emperor-as-antiquarian himself provides the *simulacrum* of this power that is legitimately a real copy at fullsize and not at all obscure and effaced. And then we have the will to un-power. The small and scattered research into obscurities conducted by Gellius copies authorized authority and cites its power, but Gellius's

research never directly arrogates to itself this power. That is, there is no original and originary power at the heart of (pure[ly derivative]) antiquarianism, only the authority of citations of authority. And yet this power at one or more removes is nevertheless a species of authority that entices and that promises a sort of mastery over others.

IX

Circulus doctorum hominum C. Caesarem, excellentis ingenii ac prudentiae uirum, salutat.

The many Caesars in Gellius can all be traced back to one. The others are smaller copies of this original, offshoots from the main trunk, possessors of a derivative authority. Hadrian's philology impresses, but Julius Caesar's came first. The first of the Caesars, Gaius Julius Caesar was not yet an "emperor" in the sense that Augustus and the rest would be. Instead, he was *dictator perpetuus*. And although the death of Caesar may have interrupted the political exercise of his office, his authority as a scholar of the Latin language remains unbroken for Gellius.

Gaius enim Caesar, ille perpetuus dictator, Cn. Pompei socer, a quo familia et appellatio Caesarum deinceps propagata est, uir ingenii praecellentis, sermonis praeter alios suae aetatis castissimi, in libris, quos ad M. Ciceronem de analogia conscripsit, "harenas" uitiose dici existimat.

For Gaius Caesar, that dictator for life, the father-in-law of Gnaeus Pompeius, the man from whom the family and then the title "Caesars" is an offshoot [*propagata est*], a man of outstanding intellect, a man whose purity of speech outstripped all of those of his age, in those books which he wrote to Marcus Cicero *On Analogy*, said that he considered that *harenas* is an error.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 19.8.3

This is presented as a recollection from Gellius's youth. He had yet to travel to Athens. One day Fronto teased (*adludens*) an educated poet friend of his (*bene eruditus homo*) who had pluralized *harena* (19.8.2). The passage just quoted is Fronto's ironic and barbed introduction of the scholarship on the topic: "Caesar said that that is wrong."

Even though the words are Fronto's and the tone is gently mocking, the passage nevertheless reiterates key moments from the Hadrian episode and encapsulates the relationship to Julius Caesar throughout the *Noctes*. Above, colonies were offshoots of the main body of Rome; here the Caesars, both

as a stock and a name, are offshoots of Julius. And of course, Gellius proves himself the offshoot of Fronto when he propagates such an anecdote. There is a synecdochic logic at work: Julius Caesar is an *unus pro omnibus* and a *pars pro toto*. To say “Caesar” is to invoke Julius. To say “scholar” is also, though, a form of invoking the same man. In fact, the analogous thought that is praised within the *Noctes* is invariably formed analogously to the arguments from Julius’s *De analogia*.⁶⁷

The perpetual dictatorship persists to the extent that one must still heed the decrees of the *De analogia*. The authority of Caesar as a scholar, though, is not founded on the politics of his office.⁶⁸ Instead, we note the (quasi-moral) purity of his language and his superlative intelligence. His academic credentials are the ones that underwrite our sense that we will allow Caesar to make an authoritative argument based on analogy, that is, on a species of *ratio*.

This continual concatenation of worldly and scholarly authority cannot be ignored. We have, in fact, a set of chains that are themselves also linked to one another. First, there is the chain of Caesars qua family. Then there is the chain of Caesar-like scholars. Then there is the chain of citations of these two chains: (I say that) Gellius said that Fronto said . . . And inside this citation of Fronto, we find a link between the family chain and the scholar chain.

Fronto is an authorized reader and rereader of Caesar. Fronto is thus a Hadrian figure, an offshoot of the family of the learned and legitimate inheritor of the name Analogist. After his florid introduction to reading Caesar, Fronto recapitulates what seem to be the capital points of Caesar’s argument: *harena* works like *caelum* and *triticum*, two other words that one does not pluralize. The paragraph continues with examples of words that are always plural and with some further issues. The voice of Fronto and that of Caesar blur. And then at the end of the argument-cum-summary-of-an-argument, Fronto readdresses his interlocutor: “Unless, poet most fair, you have anything to say against these things” (19.8.4).

67. Compare Fronto, *De bello Parthico* 9. Caesar wrote the *De analogia* during the Gallic wars. Analogously, Antoninus should be able to do something similar: *Quod te uix quicquam nisi raptim et furtim legere posse prae curis praesentibus scripsisti, fac memineris et cum animo tuo cogites C. Caesarem atrocissimo bello Gallico cum alia multa militaria tum etiam duos “de Analogia” libros scrupulosissimos scripsisse, inter tela uolantia de nominibus declinandis, de uerborum aspirationibus et rationibus inter classica et tubas.*

68. See Sinclair 1995:92–96 on the original sociopolitical valence of this text, which advocated plain style in pointed contrast to Ciceronian pyrotechnics. Caesar’s “rationalization” of Latin against (chaotic) custom/*consuetudo* was a political gesture in its own day. Hendrickson 1906 and Dahlmann 1935 remain useful overviews of the work and the contemporary debates in which it participated.

The poet defends himself against Fronto/Caesar by addressing the same set of words: *caelum*, *triticum*, and so forth. He concedes that the examples mustered by way of analogy by Fronto/Caesar themselves obey the irregular rule that is being discussed. He wishes, though, to look more at *inimicitiae* and *quadrigae*: does one really always pluralize them? He sets to one side *quadrigae* and “yields to the authority of antiquity” (*ueterum auctoritati concessero*; 19.8.6), but, he asks Fronto, what was the *ratio* according to which Caesar did not analogize *inimicitia* to *inscientia* and *impotentia* and *iniuria*? The poet justifies the “rationality” of his own reanalogy of *inimicitia* by way of an appeal to the authority of Plautus and the way he used *delicia* instead of *deliciae*. Then the poet cites the singular *inimicitia* in Ennius’s “most memorable book.” The poet has also politely and perhaps pretentiously reconfigured the dispute as occurring between himself and Caesar, not himself and Fronto. Hadn’t Caesar read Ennius? Shocking . . . The discussion of enmity (*inimicitia/-ae*) will be, then, most amicable: the poet is not casting aspersions on Fronto’s own reading.

At this juncture of the argument a copy of the *De analogia* is brought out. Gellius records that he enthusiastically committed to memory a few items from it. Gellius now displaces Fronto as the main narrative voice of the chapter. And yet Caesar himself also turns into Fronto. For when we hear the quotes from the *De analogia*, we discover that the book puts a question to “you,” to an imagined interlocutor going back and forth with Caesar about a question of grammatical *ratio*. Gellius says that Caesar said, “Do you really think that it is owing to the nature of the things themselves that . . .”⁶⁹

Let us think about the dramaturgy of erudition for a moment. Gellius writes for us a scene that he remembers. In this scene Fronto talks with a poet about some unusual nouns. In order to make his argument, Fronto recites from memory some arguments of Caesar. Then the *De analogia* itself arrives. Gellius commits it to memory and makes it part of his book. Gellius also reveals that in Caesar’s book, one party is talking with another party about some unusual nouns. That is, Fronto and the poet are having the very same conversation in the *Noctes* as are the speakers in the *De analogia*. The *ego* and the *tu* arguing in the *De analogia* correspond to Fronto and the poet who dispute analogously in the *Noctes*.

The antiquarian conversation has always already been had. And conversely, it is always already about to break out anew and to be written up all over again.⁷⁰ I report that Gellius reported that Fronto reported that

69. “num tu” inquit “harum rerum natura accidere arbitraris, quod . . .” (19.8.8).

70. Time and again a favorite title for a scholarly article: “Noch einmal . . .”

Caesar reported . . . In such a context it is only to be expected that Fronto blurs into Caesar and that Gellius becomes analogous to and yet different from Fronto, Fronto's Caesar, and Caesar himself. The border between the discussion of books and the book of discussion is highly porous. In fact, one is meant to talk, to read, and to write. The shifting story of the sand/sands drifts eternally, neither beginning nor ending, consisting of neither pure talk nor pure text. The language of story and the story of language endlessly encompass each other.

Or rather, that is how I tell the story. The infinite *mise en abyme* decidedly does not take place in Gellius. A reader of Gellius might sense the vertiginous possibility, but the characters within the specific drama of this chapter can and do find a solution to the infinite and irrational *ratio* of this process. Gellius says, "When these words had been read, Fronto said . . ." That is, after Gellius writes out the words he had committed to memory, he returns us to the central drama and its scene of reading. Caesar had just asked a question: "Do you really think . . . ?" Now Fronto asks a question: "Does it not seem to you that . . . ?" Fronto's voice blurs with that of Caesar even as he asks the Caesar Question. "Does it not seem to you that Gaius Caesar has decreed against you with sufficient clarity and force as concerns the condition of the word?"⁷¹ The idiom is thoroughly political. If Hadrian's *dissertatio* was magisterial in a scholarly way, Caesar's "proclamation" specifically recalls the political speech of a magistrate.

Fronto is, "of course," still being teasing and ironic. But let's not dismiss the case out of hand: a quip can always be more than a mere joke. And one suspects as much when the narrative voice of Gellius continues at 19.8.10: "Then, the poet, deeply stirred by the authority of the book (*auctoritas libri*), said . . ." He bows to the *auctoritas* of the book. The *dictator perpetuus* decrees in his pages. The poet hearkens to that authority. Gellius, taking dictation, records the proceedings of the tribunal. He too insists upon the political and juridical idiom for this scholarly discussion.

The poet, stirred by the authority of the book, said, "Were there the right of appeal (*ius prouocandi*) against a judgment of Caesar, I would make an appeal against this book of Caesar."⁷² The book, apparently, did not move the poet all that utterly: he wants to appeal his case even though he knows he can't. But we are among friends and equals: the tyranny of Caesar is only metaphorical. One can, in fact, make an appeal. The poet appeals to Fronto

71. *His deinde uerbis lectis ibi Fronto ad illum poetam "uidetur tibi" inquit "C. Caesar de statu uerbi contra te satis aperte satisque constanter pronuntiasset?"* (19.8.8).

72. "Si a Caesare" inquit "ius prouocandi foret, ego nunc ab hoc Caesaris libro prouocassem" (19.8.10).

to explain what Caesar really meant. Caesar's verdict is clear, but he did not give the reasoning behind his judgment (*rationem sententiae suae reddere supersedit*). Fronto is herewith invited to become Caesar all over again: the appeal is not so much against Caesar as for a more authoritative version of Caesar's *ratio*.

Fronto is happy to oblige. He gives examples and arguments. After covering them, though, Fronto returns to the game of the highly technical legal-idiom metaphors that govern this discussion. He says, "I said these things not so that I should be the foundation and underwriter (*subscriptor*) of this judgment and law, but so that I should not leave the opinion of Caesar, a learned man (*uir doctus*), ἀπαράμυθτον."⁷³ I did not want to be Caesar, says Fronto; I just wanted to look after his opinion and to see that it was not ἀπαράμυθτον. Fronto, the man who cherished the unexpected word, delivers one here. *Le mot juste* for the legal situation is apparently not a Latin word at all.

What Fronto means by ἀπαράμυθτον is not a simple question. Accordingly, we note that the conundrum of what did erudite Caesar mean? is answered only by producing a secondary problem: what did erudite Fronto mean? παραμύθ- as a stem covers consolation, palliation, and exhortation. The suffix -ητον means "capable of being." The prefix ἀ- is an alpha-privative and hence negates the sense of the whole. The dictionary entry under ἀπαράμυθτον thus not surprisingly offers "not to be persuaded or entreated, inexorable" and "(of conditions) comfortless" and "(of persons) inconsolable." John C. Rolfe's translation gives "unsupported,"⁷⁴ which is itself an unsupported rendering of the word. Yvette Julien offers "sans défence."⁷⁵ This is clearly one sense of the passage: I did not want to abandon Caesar's opinion without a μῦθος, where the word for word will here mean a word of defense when joined with παρα-. But a second meaning is also clearly present: I did not want to leave the opinion in a condition where one was unable to make an entreaty against it. I wanted to provide a defense of the notion that there is in fact a right of appeal against Caesar's book. However, that appeal means hearing the Case of What Caesar Meant as advocated by Fronto. One appeals, then, via an indirect and pointedly erudite detour, back to the subject Caesar, his intentions, and his erudition (*uir doctus*). There is and is not, then, a right of appeal against Caesar. "Against Caesar" resolves itself into "on behalf of Caesar's (obliterated) meaning."

In the space of this momentary indeterminacy, the *auctoritas* of learning

73. "*Sed haec ego*" inquit "*dixi, non ut huius sententiae legisque fundus subscriptorque fierem, sed ut ne Caesaris, uiri docti, opinionem ἀπαράμυθτον destituerem*" (19.8.12).

74. Rolfe 1927.

75. Julien 1998.

can further entangle itself in the question of the authority of Caesar's verdict: the authoritative interpretation itself, though, is both a double of and an other to the original opinion. It is a *παράμυθος that reduplicates the myth of intentionality by whispering to us words of consolation: Caesar is dead but not gone.

Fronto proceeds to supplement the defects of Caesar's text and to fill out the body of Gellius's own work. Fronto displaces and replaces Caesar. He also becomes more Caesar than Caesar, more true to the spirit of the *De analogia* than the letter of the book is true to that same spirit. This is the task that "authoritative learning" sets itself. And yet Fronto is in fact so true to both the spirit and the letter of Caesar that he does not unravel the mystery of the sands. For despite the catalog of examples that he initially provides, Fronto concludes by noting that men of affairs really do not have the time for cracking such nuts (19.8.13). He claims to detect impatience in his audience. He accordingly assigns the further exploration of the topic to whenever one might have the leisure (*otium*) to pursue it. "Go look up whether *quadriga* and *harenae* are used by any of that older band of orators or poets, that is, by any high-class and diligent author and no proletarian one" (*quaerite, an "quadrigam" et "harenas" dixerit e cohorte illa dumtaxat antiquiore uel oratorum aliquis uel poetarum, id est classicus assiduusque aliquis scriptor, non proletarius*; 19.8.15).

The idiom remains political, although Fronto has shifted the tone from pure politics to social politics. And *dumtaxat* adds a bit of a sarcastic bite to the scene: "Make sure they are real ancient authorities now." And the philology should be classical; one should only look to well-bred old authors. Fronto here subscribes to and underwrites the project of blue-blood Caesar and his book of good Latin. In fact, he shows how the assiduous reader of assiduous authors might himself participate in the authority of that classy language of yore.

It is not clear what happened to the poet. He has long since disappeared from the chapter. But Gellius, given a homework assignment, gets busy and by no means idles away his idle hours. He gladly goes off and reads the good books that Fronto has instructed him to hunt down. However, he does more than just read. He writes bits of classical philology himself, his idle *Noctes*. And so at this juncture in the text he does not tell us about what he actually read, but he instead provides a gloss on Fronto's mental state. He thus answers the question, what did erudite Fronto mean? Fronto intended, Gellius says, to get us excited about reading and hunting down relatively rare words.⁷⁶

76. *sed ut nobis studium lectitandi in quaerendis rarioribus uerbis exerceret* (19.8.16).

Gellius ends the chapter by showing off the fruits of a life of just such reading. He actually found a *quadriga*. See Varro's *Satires*. He hunted less excitedly for *harenae* because, as far as Gellius can recall, no *homo doctus* other than Caesar ever used the word (19.8.18). Strikingly, then, the only extant use of this word that should not be used in a learned author is the very passage that forbids its use. That is, only the *De analogia* used the word *harenae* and then only to forbid it.⁷⁷ What one knows of the word, then, is that it is a word meant to be otherwise unknown.

Rolfe ends the chapter by showing off the fruits of a life of just such reading.⁷⁸ Gellius's translator adds a footnote enumerating uses of *harenae*. Ovid, Vergil, Horace, Seutonius, and more used it. But were they *classici* or *proletarii*, I wonder. Has Rolfe proven himself especially diligent? Has he invoked the right of appeal against Gellius or against Caesar? Or was it just against their books? What opinion does he really have about this issue? And is it ἀπαράμυθτον? Will someone tell me what erudite Rolfe meant by this note?⁷⁹ Is the perpetual dictatorship of philology thereby overcome or reinscribed?

X

De analogia Caesaris et ratione eius dissero.

The other appearances of the *De analogia* in the *Noctes* function analogously. The authority of Caesar is invoked to give force to an argument based on grammatical *ratio*. This allows one to demarcate a line between authorized analogous thinking and unauthorized analogy. Pride of place is retained for the power of antiquarian *auctoritas* more generally, and yet the authority of authority supplements itself by annexing a specific version of the authority of *ratio*, namely, Caesar's.⁸⁰

A young man has been overzealous in his studies. Not only does he know archaic Latin, but he even speaks it, thus filling the ears of his listeners with excessively old words (*nimis priscas*) and ones that are unheard of in

77. See Butler 1997:37: the censor is compelled to repeat that which he would censor.

78. Rolfe 1927.

79. Julien 1998 has no such annotation. Am I to footnote her as being less erudite?

80. Contrast Quintilian. The rhetoric professor consults *decor* above all, even if he generally prefers a conservative *ratio Latina* as embodied by Caesar-the-authority. Therefore, he diverges from Caesar's declensions in select cases and remarks in closing that "[c]ustom has bested authority." (*mihi autem placet rationem Latinam sequi, quousque patitur decor. neque enim iam "Calypsonem" dixerim ut "Iunonem," quamquam secutus antiquos C. Caesar utitur hac ratione declinandi; sed auctoritatem consuetudo superauit*; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.5.63.)

everyday conversation (1.10.1). Favorinus takes it upon himself to put the young man in his place. The ancients spoke archaic Latin because that was the Latin of their day, says Favorinus. Favorinus summarizes his position with a quotable quote: use contemporary language and old-fashioned morals. He cites an authority for his position: Caesar's *De analogia*, book 1. Favorinus tells the youth to lay to heart a sentence that has in any case been laid away in the stores of the *Noctes*. The chapter concludes in Caesar's voice: "As if it were a reef, steer clear of the unusual and unwonted word."⁸¹ But the voice is Gellius's and Favorinus's as well.

Caesar's reasoning, his *ratio*, is pushed into the background. Instead, we have Favorinus's quotable quote bolstered by a memorable maxim for Caesar. The authority of the citation qua citation and its formal character as a maxim serves as a stand-in for an actual argument. Caesar's authority in questions of language is once again not a matter of his political authority or his preeminent birth. Rather his intelligence is again flagged: *excellētis ingenii ac prudentiae uiro*. Every learned man can thus hope to be a linguistic Caesar to the extent that he studies up on his authorized authorities, including, of course, the authority of passages cited out of the *De analogia* from memory.

We are not treated to a discourse on the actual rules and *rationes* of linguistic propriety. Instead, the chapter, itself a memorable little nugget of prose, encapsulates an encapsulation of an aesthetic issue without actually explaining it. The politics of propriety are dictated by Caesar the dictator without being justified. His authority is evoked to shut down debate, not to provoke it.⁸²

The irony is, of course, that the errant youth's error was to have read too many books and to have taken them too much to heart. He spoke as he read. But another old book will curb the young man and teach him to keep antiquities in his breast and memory. This is the advice of Favorinus/Caesar. And it is also the practice of Gellius, who memorializes the memorable moment about what to do with old books in his book of memories.

81. "atque id, quod a C. Caesare, excellentis ingenii ac prudentiae uiro, in primo de analogia libro scriptum est, 'habe semper in memoria atque in pectore, ut 'tamquam scopulum, sic fugias inauditum atque insolens uerbum'" (1.10.4).

82. See Dugan 2005:177 on Cicero's *Brutus* as a response to Caesar's *De analogia*: "Cicero's dispute with Caesar therefore offers a paradigm of the use of apparently disengaged intellectual inquiry to work out political disputes in a way typical of late republican Roman literary culture." Nevertheless, even if the antiquarians' political politics are different from Cicero's, their social politics are convergent: one notes the "linguistic elite" advocated by Cicero (Dugan 2005:179) better describes the spirit of the *Noctes* than does an insistence that *ratio* is the ready road to *Latinitas*.

The glory of erudition is to be applauded, not the glory of eloquence.⁸³ Keep old words among your stores and take them out selectively: to do such is to economize with your *penus*. Wanton verbal archaism is the absurd profligacy of a wastrel youth. The unexpected word, well chosen and selectively deployed, is the mark of the contemporary gentleman and up-to-date archaism.⁸⁴

The speech of the past returns and Caesar with it in 4.16. Gellius declares that his researches have revealed that his two antiquarian forefathers Varro and Nigidius spoke as they wrote. Gellius gives examples of their use of the “paternal” case, the *patrius casus*. That is, Gellius shows us some examples of what we would today call the genitive case of nouns of the fourth declension ending in *-uis* and not *-us*. Then he offers some fourth-declension datives. The authority of these precedents (*hanc eorum auctoritatem*) emboldened certain old-time grammarians to attempt to turn this into a rule, a *ratio*.

Here a contest between *auctoritas* and *ratio* erupts in Gellius’s text. The grammarians use the circumstance of the paternal case, the *casus casus* (*casuis?!?*), in these fathers of philology to father upon them a rigid rule that would trump the authority of precedent. The “case of giving,” that is, “the dative,” is given a rule that affects the “paternal case.” The proposed *ratio* is, then, if a dative of a fourth-declension noun ends *-ui*, the genitive of that noun should be *-uis* and not *-us*.⁸⁵

But Gellius has his authoritative counterexamples to hand. The would-be *ratio* cannot bear up against the patrimony of citations to which Gellius is heir. Lucilius did not follow this rule. Vergil did not follow this rule. And Caesar, “a serious author of the Latin language”—in more than one sense of the word “author,” too—used *dominatu* and not *dominatui* in his *Anticato*.⁸⁶ One must bow down before this domineering precedent. And if that is not enough, consult *In Dolabellam* 1.1, which is adorned with *ornatu* instead of *ornatui*.

83. See Marache 1952:61.

84. Marache 1952. See also Holford-Strevens 2003:354–63. See Martindale 1993:8–9 on the modernism of archaism in a more contemporary setting. It should be noted that the archaism of a Fronto is accompanied by a thoroughly “modern” interest in εἰκόνας and their elaborately wrought similes. Furthermore, Fronto came to his own taste for the archaic relatively late in life. See Russell 1990:14–17.

85. “Cum igitur” inquit “in casu dandi ‘huic senatui’ dicamus, genetivus ex eo singularis ‘senatuis’ est, non ‘senatus’” (4.16.4). I have not given the whole discussion of the rule, which is in fact incoherent from a contemporary perspective inasmuch as it conflates phenomena from the fifth declension with those of the fourth. This issue, though, is not the basis for Gellius’s complaint.

86. C. etiam Caesar, gravis auctor linguae Latinae, in *Anticatone*: “unius” inquit “arrogantiae, superbiae dominatuque” (4.16.8).

The deluge of authoritative attacks on this would-be rule ends, though, with an authoritative rule. The chapter closes: “In the analogy books as well (Caesar) decrees (*censet*) that all words of this sort are to be spoken without the letter *i*.”⁸⁷ The perpetually dictator dictates yet again. The rule of others bows before his rule. Of course, the rule is a just rule and a reasonable one: it accords with the authority of a variety of authorized precedents that Gellius has cited for us. Caesar has surveyed the worth of all the words of the republic of language and has expelled from the linguistic senate a set of debased figures: datives ending in *-ui*. The censorious voice of Caesar and his *ratio* becomes the authoritative voice of Gellius as the *De analogia* is transcribed into the *Noctes*.

Let us take one last peek at the visage of Caesar and ponder therewith the faces formed on analogy with his own. This will entail, though, a return to 9.14 and the obliterated face of *facies* in Quadrigarius. This relatively long chapter contains a vast number of citations that come one after another. The *ratio grammatica* that would decline the paternal case of *facies* as *faciei* rather than *facies* is battered and overwhelmed by an endless array of invocations of the patrimony of sound Latinity. Gellius invokes the analogy of *dies* and uses the analogy of the *ratio* of that word and its history to assault the grammarians’ unreasoning rationalization.

Two passages of Lucilius have a problem with what face they will wear. Will the paternal case be *facie* or *facii*? Both passages are read both ways (9.14.24). A face may not have two fathers, though. Caesar is invoked: “But Caesar in the second book of the *De analogia* thinks that one must say *huius die* and *huius specie*.”⁸⁸ On analogy with the argument of the *De analogia*, then, we ought to choose *facie* in these lines. What had faded is restored to clarity by the authoritative invocation of Caesar.

Gellius adds a supplementary endnote in his own authoritative voice: *ego quoque* . . . “I also have found written in a manuscript of Sallust’s *Jugurtha*, and this is a book of impeccable good credit (*summae fidei*) and reverential antiquity, *die* written in the genitive (*casu patrio*).”⁸⁹ You can

87. *In libris quoque analogicis omnia istiusmodi sine <“i”> littera dicenda censet* (4.16.9). Ironically one has to supplement Caesar’s authoritative deletion: the illegitimate *i* is already missing from the text.

88. *Sed C. Caesar in libro de analogia secundo “huius die” et “huius specie” dicendum putat* (9.14.25).

89. *Ego quoque in Jugurtha Sallustii summae fidei et reuerendae uetustatis libro “die” casu patrio scriptum inueni* (9.14.26). The chapter closes one sentence later after Gellius refuses to get into a new grammatical fight: what is the grammatical function of *die* here? See also an edition of Sallust’s *Jugurtha*. This very passage is used to bolster the authority of the minority of manuscripts that have *die* against the majority that do not.

have faith in what Gellius's book says about the credit one should place in Caesar's book because Gellius has found a book of Sallust that vouches for this argument.⁹⁰ The antiquity of the concrete text thus underwrites the authority of the abstract *ratio* proposed in Caesar's text. The Caesarian Sallust supports the grand man all over again, only this time linguistically rather than politically. Both the argument of Caesar and a book from (roughly) the age of Caesar prove to be sires of the authoritative use of the paternal case. Gellius's tactics reproduce the crisis of double paternity that Caesar himself had tried to conjure away. There are two ways one can establish the legitimacy of Caesar's maxim that there can be only one paternal case: there is direct appeal to the authority of Caesar's *ratio* in and of itself, and then there is also appeal to the nonobliterated face of an old manuscript and the evidence, clear as day, written on it of how one writes the word "day."

There is no right of appeal (*ius prouocandi*) against a judgment of Caesar. One can, however, make a supplement. Gellius appeals to the manuscript tradition. He herewith becomes Caesar all over again: the appeal is not so much against Caesar as for a more authoritative version of Caesar's *ratio*. The power of Caesar's language is supported by and indeed embodied in the power of language inscribed as a book. Book-as-authority and the book-of-authority converge: an appeal to an old book is analogous to the appeal to the *De analogia*. There is an underwriter (*subscriber*) of this law about how to judge paternal cases, namely, the antiquarian himself even as the antiquarian disavows the full scope and consequences of his own activity. And it is this activity that itself is most in danger of remaining ἀπαράμυθτον unless we examine it carefully.

The process is both circular and recursive. The logic of *ratio* and the logic of authority swirl around each other. Neither is exactly a first principle because each thrives only in the presence of the other. Caesar is the proto-princeps; his *rationes* are akin to dictatorial decrees. And yet there is something incomplete in Caesar's power. In the space of this momentary indeterminacy, the *auctoritas* of learning can further entangle itself in the question of the authority of Caesar's verdict. It becomes, then, a self-siring second father of the question of the paternal case.

90. On the authoritative appropriation of manuscripts, one can compare Lucian's *Adversus indoctum et libros multos ementem*. We see there as well a world of authorized readers and their relationships to the material texts that they fetishize. The heroic community of scholarly readers of Homer stands in stark contrast to the Thersites-like ignorant book collector (§7).

LIBER SECVNDVS



Ratio

I

Quid sit ratio et quomodo eo uerbo Gellius usus sit.

Ratio is a complex word. It has many different meanings. It straddles a variety of different semantic fields. It participates in a wealth of idioms. As I have already discussed, for an ancient scholar of Latin, the first association upon hearing the word *ratio* would likely be *analogia* and *etymologia*. That is, *ratio* corresponds to a style of scholarly argument about how words work, and it includes an analysis by means of analogy or etymology. By way of a rough approximation, we could say that etymology is historical and diachronic and, conversely, that analogy is systematic and synchronic.¹ Neither of these branches, though, should be confused with “pure reason.” Etymology can be leveraged for a variety of reasons, and many analogies are forced.² Nevertheless, the grammarian advertises himself as the master of the rational account (*ratio*) and the definition (*definitio*), and with these he can discuss proper uses and correct errors he detects in others.³ A grammarian competes over the details of these rules but never questions the rule of the rule itself: “The rival grammarians cling as if for life each to his own rule because their lives—insofar as these were identified with professional and cultural status—did indeed depend on the rules.”⁴

1. See Taylor 1974:113–14 and his conclusions about Varro’s *De lingua Latina*. See Blank 1998:xxxiv–xl for a review of the “analogue versus anomalist” debate in antiquity. Or as Blank summarizes it, “[t]he argument, then, was whether to take a rationalist or an empiricist approach to grammar” (1998:xxxv).

2. Playful etymologies are familiar from the poets. See, for example, Michalopoulos 2001 on Ovid and Gaide 1999 on Plautus. For the vicissitudes of etymological thought, see Maltby 1990 and Nifadopoulos 2003.

3. See Kaster 1988:50 and 163.

4. Kaster 1988:53. See Kaster’s footnotes in this section for places where the *grammatici*

And yet the full scope of the word *ratio* is much larger than the narrow field delimited by the specific scholarly methods of a particular class of Roman reader. It seems reasonable, then, to ask about the story of *ratio* and to consider whether there are any pertinent analogies to be drawn between the other meanings of the word and those emphasized by the grammarians. Perhaps we can offer as well a rational account of the connection between the word's etymology and its proper use.

Ratio is etymologically connected to *rerī*, "to think, to hold an opinion." The cognitive aspect of the word persists at the core of many of its uses. *Ratio* includes the act of reasoning, the explanation one gives concerning one's reasoning, or just a descriptive account. It can be consideration and the fruits of reflection. It can be a plan or even a general guiding system or rule. A *ratio* is a manner of doing something either concretely or abstractly. There are mathematical aspects to the word as well. And so *ratio* can be the act of calculation, the calculation of accounts, or one's account balance. *Ratio* can also be proportion, the relation between one quantity and another quantity.

If we track his habits, his *usus*, and his *consuetudo*, we see that Gellius manifestly deprecates *ratio* in its technical, scholarly aspect. He snorts at the grammarians who can appeal only to their rules.⁵ Authority is, as we have seen, much to be preferred. But the *ratio* of analogy does find its way into Gellius, and Caesar is an important vector of its viral transmission. Gellius prefers, then, authorized rationality and effectively uses it to rationalize the hegemony of authority itself.⁶

In 6.9, one of the few passages where Gellius himself discusses *ratio* and does not instead report another's discussion with a smirk, we see that tropes of authorization immediately enter into the argument. That is, *ratio* does not stand alone. Gellius opens the chapter by enumerating some perfect verbs with reduplicated stems: *poposci*, *momordi*, *pupugi*, *cucurri*. Gellius seemingly approves of their use—does *probabiliter* mean "satisfactorily" or

and their rules appear in Gellius. His own discussion opens with the memorably absurd fight between two *grammatici* that Gellius says he witnessed at 14.5.

5. Holford-Strevens 1988:126. See also the more sociologically nuanced Kaster 1988:57.

6. Rather than leveraging authority, Quintilian forces *ratio* to collapse into *consuetudo*. He argues that analogy is retrospective and an *obseruatio* of what has happened, not a *lex* and prospective. Therefore, "it was nothing but custom that produced analogy itself" (*ut ipsam analogiam nulla res alia fecerit quam consuetudo*; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.6.16). Even more deflating for the archaist is the following: "And indeed what is 'old speech' other than the old habit of speaking?" (*Et sane quid est aliud uetus sermo quam uetus loquendi consuetudo*? Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.6.43). Authority is nothing but habit become passé.

just “plausibly” here?—when he declares that this is how almost all the learned set speak: the authorized speakers use this usage.⁷ Gellius, though, is more learned than the rather learned, more *doctus* than the *doctiores* he has just mentioned. He knows, then, of contrary precedents. Ennius used *memorderit* instead of *momorderit* in his *Satires*. A deluge of citations follows showing that the contemporary use of the educated does not correspond to certain uses of the ancients.

At the end of the catalog of precedent, Gellius decides to take a stab at generating a *ratio* that will account for the evidence. He sees in the epsilon of Greek reduplicated perfects an explanatory analogy for the Latin use (*ratio autem istarum dictionum haec esse uideri potest*; 6.9.13). Gellius’s *ratio* is only a partial one, though. He does not set out to generate a fixed rule that will itself generate new uses. He instead only seeks to give an account of what the authorities have said. He is competing not as a *grammaticus* with a crowd of *grammatici* but as a learned gentleman who thinks it reasonable that we appreciate the wealth of his stores of learning. Gellius gives us a glimpse of an antiquarian’s *ratio* that functions in a manner analogous to and distinct from a grammarian’s *ratio*.

One anecdote does show Gellius wrangling with a *grammaticus* on a question of *ratio*. Gellius flags a sort of reluctance to include this more humble material in his *Noctes*. Gellius was young; he got angry; he lashed out at a *grammaticus*. Maturity brings a sort of quiet contempt that allows a man simply to avoid confronting grammarians and their folly. Choice episodes might make it into one’s notebooks, though. When we look at the details of Gellius’s argument, we see that *ratio* is again used to bolster authority rather than being self-supporting.

The chapter opens with Gellius praising the accuracy of two lines of Caecilius that are about to be put in question by a young *grammaticus* (15.9.1). That is, Gellius ensures that we do not have the same complaint that the *grammaticus* did even before he gives us the lines that contain the potential solecism. When Gellius “happened” (*forte*) to recite the same lines in a circle of educated young men (*circulus iuuenum eruditiorum*), a not unfamous *grammaticus* falls for the bait and complains with a superior air that Caecilius thought he could get away with such a howler: *frons* as a masculine noun! Why, I never . . . (15.9.2–3).

Gellius leaps to authority’s defense: no, it is modernity that deserves reproach, both the principle of regularity called analogy and the authority of

7. “Poposci,” “momordi,” “pupugi,” “cucurri” *probabiliter dici uidetur, atque ita nunc omnes ferme doctiores hisce uerbis utuntur* (6.9.1).

older writers support this use: *et ratio proportionis, quae analogia appellatur, et ueterum auctoritates non "hanc," sed "hunc frontem" debere dici suadeant* (15.9.4). With both *ratio* and *auctoritas* on his side, Gellius can't lose.⁸

Gellius plays what he thinks is his strong card first: he cites Cato. The *grammaticus* haughtily dismisses Gellius's "authorities": *missas auctoritates facias*. He wants to hear the *ratio*.⁹ In the face of this insult to Cato and this challenge to himself, Gellius gets angry. He sarcastically replies, "Listen, my teacher, . . ." He offers the *ratio*: nouns that end in *-ons* are masculine if their genitive ends in the same syllable as *mons*, *fons*, *pons*, and *frons*. It is an interesting rule inasmuch as it seems designed largely to meet this exception: the supply of words meeting both of these conditions is extremely limited.¹⁰ Whether it is the aura of speciousness to the rule or his own vanity that drives him to it, the *grammaticus* snaps back with his own sarcasm that this *ratio* is no *ratio*: "Listen, my student, . . ." He claims that there are lots of contrary examples. Everyone begs to hear them. He grows flush as he cannot come up with one. Gellius gives him thirty days to think of a way to break the definition he had forged/faked: *quo rescinderet finitionem fictam* (15.9.11).¹¹ And that is the last we hear of the matter and of this half-learned grammarian (*semidoctus grammaticus*) who sent Cato packing (15.9.6).

8. Compare the situation in Quintilian. His "but . . ." opens onto a space where a grammarian may well find that his prized analytical categories excuse the inexcusable. "First, barbarisms and solecisms are disgusting and to be avoided. But sometimes these failings are excused because of *consuetudo* or *auctoritas* or *uetustas* or even from virtue's vicinity. It is often hard to separate these things from rhetorical figures. Lest such slippery niceties trip him up, the *grammaticus* will pay zealous attention to the fine distinctions we will cover more broadly when we deal with figures of speech" (*Prima barbarismi ac solecismi foeditas absit. Sed quia interim excusantur haec uitia aut consuetudine aut auctoritate aut uetustate aut denique uicinitate uirtutum (nam saepe a figuris ea separare difficile est): ne qua tam lubrica observatio fallat, acriter se in illud tenue discrimen grammaticus intendat, de quo nos latius ibi loquemur ubi de figuris orationis tractandum erit*; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.5.5).

9. Discussing this chapter and 5.21, Marache says of the grammarians, "Ils n'ont confiance que dans la raison, dans le raisonnement. Ils poussent le culte de l'analogie jusqu'à l'absurde" (1952:212).

10. *Vir adprime doctus Faustroll sic disseruit*. Ex.: l'épiphénomène étant souvent l'accident, la pataphysique sera surtout la science que du général. Elle étudiera les lois qui régissent les exceptions, et expliquera l'univers supplémentaire à celui-ci; ou moins ambitieusement décrira un univers que l'on peut voir et que peut-être l'on doit voir à la place du traditionnel, les lois que l'on a cru découvrir de l'univers traditionnel étant des corrélations d'exceptions aussi, quoique plus fréquentes, en tous cas de faits accidentels qui, se réduisant à des exceptions peu exceptionnelles, n'ont même pas l'attrait de la singularité.

Définition: la pataphysique est la science des solutions imaginaires, qui accorde symboliquement aux linéaments les propriétés des objets décrits par leur virtualité.

The status of the *ratio* in this chapter is ambiguous. But the authority of Cato is not. Nor, for that matter, is there any doubt but that Gellius and the *grammaticus* are themselves wrangling over who will be an authority in the here and now and what tools will produce the authoritative account of Latin.

Truth be told, etymology is frequently a game played on the border between Greek and Latin: which words are truly Greek, which truly Latin? Gellius makes us sensitive to the language of linguistics. He depicts a discourse on language that is itself a series of performative utterances. The power of telling the truth of words blurs, though, with the problem of telling truth to power.

At dinner one evening *chez* Favorinus, Greek and Latin poems and histories were being read.¹² The word *iapyx*, a name for one of the winds, came up. The guests wonder as to the *ratio* of such an uncommon word. Thereupon Favorinus spoke as follows (*ita fabulatus est*; 2.22.3) . . . Favorinus's familiar fable may or may not be a lot of hot air blowing from all directions about the story of *Fauonius, et alii*. But it is seemingly very erudite: the bag of winds is opened, and an odyssey of wandering erudition ensues. We visit now Greece and now Rome. Etymology tells the true tale of each wind's name and birth. Eventually Favorinus makes his way to the Apulians, who name the *iapyx* after themselves and their river the Ἰαπυγία (2.22.21). Favorinus's tale breezes along for a while longer before slackening off. Gellius comments on its affable charm and then proceeds to correct a couple of the details via Cato and Nigidius. In short, the *ratio* of the word *iapyx* is a *fabula* that is not necessarily all that ἔτυμον. Etymology is pleasant dinner conversation from the mouth of a highly learned man. It informs, but it can always use some supplementary and authoritative citations from other sources.¹³

One day three authorities were standing and chatting in the vestibule of authority: Fronto, Festus, and Apollinaris converse (*fabulantes*) in the entryway to the Palace as Gellius and other eager students of Latin listen in (19.13.1). This is not a dissertation; we are again shooting the breeze. Etymology crops up here too in the course of a discussion of the right word to use for midgets:¹⁴ Fronto asks the *grammaticus* Apollinaris to teach

11. Compare Atherton 1998:237n61.

12. See Johnson 2000:624 on the need for a "sociological contextualization of reading event[s]." Skidmore 1996:109–12 offers some of what Johnson calls for.

13. For the nonauthoritative quality of *fabula*, compare 3.10.11, where Gellius dismisses as a tall tale Herodotus's account of the height of Orestes and labels the historian a *homo fabulator*.

14. Whether or not to use "midgets" or some other term is a debate that one can still have. The results again yield a sociology of proper use via appeals to power, precedent, and reason.

him whether one should say *pumilones* instead of *nani*. Fronto has seen *pumilones* in old books and has heard that *nani* is vulgar and barbarous (19.13.2). Apollinaris, Gellius's own sometime teacher, reveals that one can indeed authoritatively use the word *nani*, which is neither vulgar nor barbaric, but even if the ignorant do use it, according to the *census*, the word is of Greek origin.¹⁵

Apollinaris resumes the political idiom he has evoked with *censetur*. The word would be granted its citizenship (*civitate donatum*) or at least established in a Latin colony (*in Latinam coloniam deductam*) if Fronto himself would deign to use it (*si tu eo uti dignatus fores*) (19.13.3). And this grant of citizenship would be far preferable to the vulgar new citizens of the language that Laberius the comic poet produced.¹⁶ Apollinaris is claiming, then, that Fronto has the authority to lend authority to words. He is capable of being an author of authority, and as a censor of words, his own use of the word will reregister this noun on the rolls of Good Latin. It is already in use, but it is not yet a citizen. We know its origin; we have seen its etymology. The word is *proletarius*, but Fronto has the power to make it *classicus*. Compare, that is, the discussion of 19.8 from before. And of course, the present discussion contains an implicit allegory of another sort: can erudite Greeks like Favorinus become well-heeled Latin authorities provided they know how to talk breezily about etymology and cite the proper authorities when required?

II

De rationum generibus.

A rational account of Gellius's use of *ratio*, then, reveals that the authoritative use of scholarly *ratio* within the *Noctes* is one wherein analogy and etymology play a properly qualified and subordinate role relative to authority itself. I would like, though, to dedicate the remainder of my comments to

15. "Est quidem" inquit "hoc" Apollinaris "in consuetudine inperiti uulgi frequens, sed barbarum non est censeturque linguae Graecae origine" (19.13.3). Even as Apollinaris has just declared, in effect, that *nani* is etymologically a Greek word, when actually he uses the phrase *ratio etymologiae*, Apollinaris is in fact talking about the etymological connection between the Greek word *vávoi* and some unexpressed other word from which it is derived. Rather than talk etymology, Apollinaris instead gives an authority for its Greek use: he saw *vávoi* used in Aristophanes' play *The Cargo Ships*. *vávoις enim Graeci uocauerunt breui atque humili corpore homines paulum supra terram exstantes idque ita dixerunt adhibita quadam ratione etymologiae cum sententia uocabuli competente et, si memoria* inquit "mihi non labat, scriptum hoc est in comoedia Aristophanis, cui nomen est Ὀλκάδης" (19.13.3).

16. Gellius catalogs some of these in 16.7.

an account of the role played by “rationality” more generally in Gellius’s thought. This will include a discussion of Gellius’s treatment of philosophy and philosophers, his use of some technical terms, and a meditation on certain ironic or recursive irrational rationalities to be found in the *Noctes*.

III

An rationem ei constare potest qui οικονομὴν σοφισμάτων tractat?

Identidem: In light of all that talk of authority, by what right do I make my claims concerning Gellius? Am I being irrational when I talk of *ratio*? Am I being captious (*captiosus*), or is Gellius? Is he a legitimate heir or a successful legacy-hunter, a *captator*? Does he really own those stores of his? Are they native to his own estate, or are they exotic, imported, expropriated, enslaved, or even merely filched? Are these the stores of a *uir bonus* who is a *bonus agricola* or those of a luxuriant sensualist who wallows in the exotic and the antique? Captiousness is a critical conundrum and a quasi-legal one, then.

Oh, but what is captiousness, you ask? For the dialecticians it is fallaciousness, a specious argument designed to lead one astray. When the literary critics are censoring the censor Quintus Metellus’s speech on marriage, Castricius takes up his defense: “A censor,” he says, “ought to speak one way, a rhetorician another. One allows a rhetorician to use phrases that are false, bold, cunning, tricky, and captious, provided only that they are plausible and are able by any sort of cleverness to sneak up and sway the hearts of men.”¹⁷ Captiousness would appear to be a quality that separates a censor from a sophist.

A praise of the captious is, though, possible. One is to hand: the philosopher Taurus pleads its case (7.13).¹⁸ Gellius makes it clear that Taurus makes it clear that a night of genteel philology, a *Nox Philologiae*, even, is very well served by this kind of clever banter.

When one accepted a dinner invitation from the philosopher Taurus, the prospective guests were expected to behave in a certain manner.¹⁹ He

17. “*Aliter*” inquit “*censor loqui debet, aliter rhetor. Rhetori concessum est sententiis uti falsis, audacibus, uersutis, subdolis, captiosis, si ueri modo similes sint et possint mouendos hominum animos qualicumque astu inreperere*” (1.6.4).

18. See Lakmann 1995:69–81.

19. Consider, though, an earlier dinner where a youth talks philosophy and spoils the meal: *intempestiue atque insubide disserebat* (1.2.4). This early etiquette lesson makes it clear that thundering on about your prowess with syllogisms and *captiones* constitutes utterly gauche table manners. *syllogismorum captionumque dialecticarum laqueis strepebat* κυριεύοντας *et ἡσυχάζοντας et σωπείτας aliosque id genus griphos neminem posse dicens nisi se dissoluere* (1.2.4).

was a literary man, and his parties were feasts of words. Gellius says that rather than arrive “tax exempt” (*immunes*) or without making a contribution (*asymboli*), and rather than delivering delicate dishes to the dinner, they contributed the elegant refinement of queries.²⁰ The not-*immunes*, then, are doing a service and offering a *munus* to their munificent guest. The contribution is a “throwing together” (συνβάλλειν → *coniectabamus*) of broken tokens of recognition that are to be made whole, σύμβολα. The symbolic offering of questions to be answered produces a mixed tray of elegant signs upon which the company descends with relish.

And so each of them would think something up before he arrived: *commentus paratusque ibat*. Gellius’s *commentarii* now present us anew with the same dishes and themselves help us to prepare for similar evenings in Attica and elsewhere. The playful subtlety (*subtilitatis ludicrae*) is offered us anew here and now: Are we at the table or just eating table scraps? That is, what is the relationship between the participle *commentus* and the noun *commentarius*?

In any case, the fare is not heavy. Instead, one brings to Taurus’s table certain charming and slight little sophisms (ἐνθυμημάτια) that saucily provoke a mind blooming with the flush of wine.²¹ The examples offered show word-play and logical conundrums: When does a dying man die? When he is already in death or when he is yet in life?²² When an unnamed “some people” are reported as complaining that such were *captiones* and worthless trifles, Taurus speaks up (7.13.7). He will not allow captiousness to be censored: serious philosophers have investigated these questions. Plato himself talks about the life/death question in the *Parmenides*. Taurus tells you to go look it up. Gellius then breaks off and says that such were the *symbolae* at Taurus’s house and such, as he said, were the sweetmeats of our dessert.

But, you will say, Taurus did not praise captiousness; he praised the seemingly captious. You are not so drunk nor is the night so advanced that the speciousness of my arguments will escape your notice. Notice, then, the elegant refinement Taurus has contributed: the argument that at first glance comes across as looks-real-but-is-fake is instead better classified as looks-fake-but-is-real. If I could send you, then, to a book that would gloss this book, would I be declared to have made a contribution? And yet this

20. *cum domum suam nos uocaret, ne omnino, ut dicitur, immunes et asymboli ueniremus, coniectabamus ad cenulam non cuppedias ciborum, sed argutias quaestionum* (7.13.1).

21. *Quaerebantur autem non grauiā nec reuerenda, sed ἐνθυμημάτια quaedam lepida et minuta et florentem uino animum lacessentia* (7.13.4).

22. *Quaesitum est, quando moriens moreretur: cum iam in morte esset, an cum etiamtum in uita foret?* (7.13.5).

hypothetical turn of things is much like Taurus's: it both disrupts the party and continues it. The little sophism ought to remain a sophism, and yet we cannot bear to leave it as a mere dessert. Instead, every such piece is merely an appetizer, a pointer to some longer discussion and a trip to the library to check references.

The economy of the exchange is itself captious. The ledger of its logic does not exactly square, *ratio rationis non constat*. The symbol is a contribution that contributes to a whole without ever forming a whole. The dessert is the appetizer is the main course. Certainly the *Noctes* itself is a giant main course consisting only of desserts and appetizers. The *Noctes* as a whole is a collection of tax-exempt and yet simultaneously taxing symbols heaped together to form a (non)whole. There is always something to be supplemented to it, another argument, another book, another dinner.

Captious culinary accountancy: we see it again in 18.13. Let's put on our green visors and do the (cooked) books. Gellius attended a party in Athens during the Saturnalia. The Roman festival of inversion is being celebrated at Not-Rome. First, the scholars take a bath. As they wash, they keep their minds busy by playing around with some *captiones*. They would toss these into the middle like dice. It is a game of craps played by rolling the sophisticated bones in the hopes of fleecing your erudite companions. The party, the mental exercise, and the act of casting things into the middle of the crowd all recall Taurus's table. In fact, the mention of dice (*tesserulae*) itself invokes the symbolism of the *symbola* as a *tessera*, which can be the same kind of token as is a σύμβολον.

It is not yet dinnertime, though. But the dinner does emerge out of this game, for the cost of failing to solve or appreciate a *captio* is one sestertius. And it is from the pool of money that accumulates as a function of ignorance that one subsequently purchases the provisions for their common meal. They convert the undigested items from the mental feast of wit and wisdom into bodily provender.²³

Gellius himself says he has a hard time converting these sophisms into Latin for us. But he does manage to lay away in his *penus* Latin versions of the Greek *captiones*. An example that turns out not to be a mere example: "What is a human is not a horse. A human, though, is an animal. Therefore, a horse is not an animal" (18.13.5). This example is a genus and species conundrum. We can compare the problem of knowing what a *penus* is from the discussion of 14.1 above. Another such puzzle is on the way.

23. Compare Lukinovich 1990:269–70 on the multiple dimensions of the play with the metaphor of a "banquet of words" in Athenaeus. Virtually every contributor to Braund and Wilkins 2000 makes related observations.

Gellius delights to tell how cleverly Diogenes “paid back” (*remuneratus sit*) the ill-willed munificence of a certain Platonist. The dialectician asked, “You are not what I am?” Diogenes assents. “I am, though, a human.” Diogenes assents. “Therefore you are not a human.” Diogenes hereupon cap-tiously captures his would-be captor: “That is assuredly untrue. But if you want it to become true, start your proposition with me.”²⁴ There you have it, straight from the horse’s mouth: the dialectician is a horse’s ass. The logic of Diogenes’ retort is not, of course, a solution to the *captio*. He instead embraces it. That Zeus-born wise old owl Diogenes took captivating flight that night. He conceded erroneously only in the end to repay the other man in his own coin, the wooden nickel. And yet we all profit thereby. The feast of the *Noctes* is enriched.

The sophism will be familiar to students of Stoic logic. It will also be familiar to readers of the *Noctes*. We have, in fact, already exchanged this same coin (18.2.9). I will show you the earlier citation a bit later when we talk more of table talk. Right now we can see revealed a secret of economics more generally: value does not inhere in the thing itself; the value of a coin is not the value of the metal of which it is composed. Instead, value is a function of the circulation of these coins, provided, of course, that they bear a legitimate stamp on their face, provided that they bear the mark of Caesar. It may well be the case that we are told to beware of counterfeits and lead slugs; however, it is also true that an undetected counterfeit can circulate just as effectively as the real thing; provided the other hands over the goods, a fake will do as well as a real coin.

Hence the pleasure of the captious for these men. They are obsessed with finding the good, old words. Their Latin is archaic, their Greek old Attic. Endless hours are spent digging around for a horde of word-treasure, a *thesaurus*. The fruit of their labors is a word mosaic.²⁵ The tiles of this mosaic are *tesserae*, stones laboriously collected, appraised, and exchanged. One casts them in the middle with a studied aleatory air: each is both a contribution and a challenge; those who fail this challenge, though, will nevertheless still be asked to make some sort of contribution, a monetary one, a literal coin since they cannot pay in the true, that is, metaphorical, coin of

24. *Nam cum ita rogasset dialecticus: “quod ego sum, id tu non es?” et Diogenes adnuisset atque ille addidisset: “homo autem ego sum,” cum id quoque adsensus esset et contra dialecticus ita concludisset: “homo igitur tu non es,” “hoc quidem,” inquit Diogenes, “falsum est, et si uerum id fieri uis, a me incipe”* (18.13.8).

25. Marache 1952: “L’évolution est accomplie jusqu’au bout. L’orateur n’a plus de cause à défendre, l’écrivain n’a plus rien à exposer: ils ne valent que par les mots qu’ils emploient. Ce ne sont plus des artistes, ce sont des artisans qui, sorte de mosaïstes, assemblent . . . les pierres colorées les plus belles et les plus rares qu’ils aient trouvées.”

the realm. Conversely, those who succeed in identifying this sportive picnic for what it is can transform an hors d'oeuvre into an injunction to go seek out the *chefs d'oeuvre* of various *grandes hommes* of erudite literature.

IV

Potest huic meae tam ancipiti captioni isse obuiam? Sicine ab adulescente discipulo magister philologiae inclutus suo sibi argumento confutatus est et captionis uersute excogitatae frustratus fuit?

My captious proposal, then, is that knowledge itself obeys a captious logic. This is a vicious, fallacious proposal, and one that ought to be countered provided we can find a court that will hear the case. Inversion and conversion disturb. *Tu quoque!* That kind of reciprocal action paralyzes scholarly judgment: back and forth, again and again, reasoning cycles and circles without coming to a stop. An argument about Gellius ought to be of a different kind than are Gellian arguments, lest one wheel around and say, "But you too are an antiquarian."

Let us look at the captiousness of 5.10. That chapter opens: "Among defective arguments far and away the worst vice seems to be what the Greeks call convertible (ἀντιστρέφοντα) arguments. Some Romans reasonably call them 'reciprocal' (*receptroca*)."²⁶ This logical fallacy is effectively a rhetorical fallacy for Gellius: one diagnoses a convertible argument by noting that it can be turned against the one who spoke it (*in eum . . . a quo dictum est*) and has equal validity on both sides (*utrimque pariter ualet*) (5.10.3). We can notice that Gellius did not say that it was equally invalid. That is, the vice, the *uitium*, of the argument is its excessive hardness. It can knock not just one man but rather two on their asses. This is not *logos*-as-reason moving autonomously and inexorably forward, not Aristotle's *Logic* or even Hegel's. Instead, it is *logos*-as-argument and *logos*-as-story circulating without going anywhere. Nevertheless, Gellius himself earns by saving-cum-disseminating these bad pennies.

The example Gellius offers of a convertible argument is a historical one. We have here logic on trial and a trial of logic: the case of Euathlus v. Protagoras is now in session. Protagoras has agreed to teach Euathlus rhetoric. Euathlus pays half his fee with the stipulation that he will pay the other half when he pleads and wins his first case. Euathlus fails to plead any cases. Protagoras wants his money. Protagoras takes Euathlus to court to sue for

26. *Inter uitia argumentorum longe maximum esse uitium uidetur, quae ἀντιστρέφοντα Graeci dicunt. Ea quidam e nostris non hercle nimis absurde "receptroca" appellauerunt* (5.10.1).

his fees. Protagoras claims that if he loses he wins, and if he wins he wins: a judgment for him means Euathlus must pay, and a judgment against him means Euathlus must pay (5.10.9–10).

Euathlus, true to his name, is a noble competitor, knows a number of good moves, and is keen to win a crown. Euathlus first declares that he could easily slip Protagoras's *captio* if he wanted. The two-headed logic of Protagoras's proposition does not appreciate the existence of a third possibility: Euathlus could hire someone to speak on his behalf. And so, there you have it; the *captio* is dissolved. Euathlus has determined where in the proposition assent need not be made.

But Euathlus does not want to destroy the *captio*. Instead, he wraps himself up in its circling logic. The man of vice lays hold of a *uitium* of logic and refuses to let go even though he knows how to elude it. He crows, "But in this victory of mine I take the greater pleasure when I conquer you not just in the case itself but also in the very proposition. And so get ready to learn, O teacher most wise." Euathlus reciprocates. He pays Protagoras back in his own coin: *Disce, stultissime adulescens, utroque id modo fore, uti reddas, quod peto, siue contra te pronuntiatum erit siue pro te* (5.10.9) is sarcastically converted into *Disce igitur tu quoque, magister sapientissime, utroque modo fore, uti non reddam, quod petis, siue contra me pronuntiatum fuerit siue pro me* (5.10.13). And then, of course, Euathlus converts the formal proposition: if I lose you lose; if I win you lose.

Gellius says that the judges were at a loss as how to decide the case. Their specific fear is that their judgment would rescind itself no matter on which side it was pronounced (*ne sententia sua, utramcumque in partem dicta esset, ipsa sese rescinderet*; 5.10.15). In order to preserve their own authority, they defer judging indefinitely: the case is left without a verdict and postponed to a far-off day. Gellius closes the chapter: "And so a famed teacher of eloquence was confuted with his very own argument by his young student, and he was defrauded of his cleverly thought out *captio*."²⁷ Gellius, then, plays the judge of the case after its long deferral. The original judges have vacated the case, and Gellius's own sententious *sententia* becomes the last word on the matter.

Euathlus himself insists on a captious victory. He could have won a proper logician's victory: he knew how to elude Protagoras's proposition. But Euathlus has refused that triumph. Instead of the circulation of the demanded coins, Euathlus turns the proposition Protagoras had minted over

27. *Sic ab adulescente discipulo magister eloquentiae inclutus suo sibi argumento confutatus est et captionis uersute excogitatae frustratus fuit* (5.10.16).

onto its obverse face and hands it right back to him. In so doing Euathlus guarantees that both the logical proposition and the court case cannot come to a conclusion. Instead, the case circulates qua conundrum and enters into antiquarian lore as a story to be circulated.

Gellius as the recirculator of this story himself mints a related logical conundrum. He judges that the nonjudgment implied a successful disappropriation of Protagoras by Euathlus. This captious verdict by Gellius allows the case of logical conversion to be reciprocated. That is, I can say, "*Tu quoque, Gelli!*" The story that has been laid up in his stores participates in the vicious logic of circulation that governs both the parts and the whole of the *Noctes*. The younger generation defrauds the past of its teachings only in order to turn those same lessons about so as to win a judgment in its favor. *Ego quoque, lector. . .*

Philology's captiousness is both a win-win and a lose-lose proposition. If we talk of the Protagoras anecdote without mentioning "as Gellius says," then we have cheated Gellius of this *captio* in a perfectly Gellian manner. The story was meant to be stolen/circulated. And the plunder of this counterfeit logic allows the gold standard of the old coins/old stories to keep the economy of learned exchange afloat even as one accuses the antiquarians of intellectual bankruptcy.

The alternate/double version of the Euathlus and Protagoras story is the Tisias and Corax story. Let me put it into circulation for a moment. The details can be found in Sextus Empiricus,²⁸ but the anecdote, or at least its witty summary was proverbial in antiquity: "A bad egg from a bad Corax/crow (ἐκ κακοῦ κόρακος κακὸν ᾠόν)." Corax and Tisias had the exact same problem: teaching, nonpayment, a court case, a sophistical conundrum. One accordingly wonders if it is not illogical to look for a true history of the rhetoric of illogic: in the beginning there were two sets of two. But the *sententia* that circulates concerning this alternative version of the same story has a different emphasis. First, the original judges are allowed to judge the value of the case: throwing the two out of the court, they added that famous phrase, "A bad egg . . ." (ἐπιφωνήσαντες τὸ . . .). Sextus Empiricus implicitly sides with the judgment by repeating it. Unlike Gellius, though, he is not himself visibly displacing the judges as he duplicates them. Moreover, in the *sententia* minted by the original judges, we see that the moral verdict goes against both sides. Tisias is not crowned with victory; instead he's just bad. The valorization of the captious overcoming of one's teachers never comes into play. Conversely, we find in Gellius the themes of winning

28. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos*, 2.95–96.

by losing, reciprocating the reciprocal, deferring-as-judging-as-deferring, and circulation-as-accumulation-as-circulation.

In fact the very next chapter of the *Noctes* circulates-accumulates the logic of illogic all over again. 5.11 is about another ἀντιστρέφον argument. And from the lemma itself we can see that Gellius is going to take a stand and going to render a verdict: “That the syllogism of Bias about marriage cannot be seen as convertible” (*Biantis de re uxoria syllogismum non posse uideri ἀντιστρέφειν*). The problem of marriage, of the exchange and circulation of women, is itself potentially a problem of circular logic. Bias had said: You will marry either a beautiful or an ugly wife. The one is bad. The other is bad. Therefore, you should not marry. I am paraphrasing. The original contains the following antithesis between the fair and the foul: “a common whore” versus “a punishment.” The καλή is κοινή, while the αἰσχρά is a ποινή (5.11.2). Utterly ignoring the gender politics of the formulation, Gellius looks at its formal logic and finds that the syllogism does not convert when one negates its terms (5.11.3–4). Moreover Favorinus spots a problem in the premise: there are middling women whom one could marry who would have neither defect (5.11.8). This medial form of the woman whose *forma* is *media* is, Gellius says Favorinus says Ennius says, also called *stata* (5.11.12). The middle form just stands there in a fixed position. She is, says Favorinus, neither common nor a problem. She does not circulate in common like a whore, nor does she cause displeasure when one has congress with her.

Here we find a second metaphorical double for Gellius himself. First, we saw the captious student of the captious master, Euathlus as model and model anecdote. This time we see the circulation of the proposition of the danger of circulation. In the middle the medial figure should just stand still. The goodly wife, overseer of the household stores, is a medium who mediates questions of the domestic economy.²⁹ Her value is not nil to negative as she does not circulate freely and in common. Her value is not negative as she does not yield loss. Neither fair nor foul, neither great author nor base author, Gellius circulates tales of uncommon learning. He stands there in a fixed position distributing solid fare from his domestic stores. He stands by his men, his Favorinus, his Taurus, his Cato, without ever standing out in front of them.³⁰ Of course, one wonders if he is not just the common whore of the great. And we wonder as well if his ugly and tedious

29. On this kind of wifeliness, see Plutarch, *Præcepta coniugalia*, a text never mentioned by Gellius though he is a reader of Plutarch. See Wohl 1997 on the “Advice.”

30. Marache 1952:315: “Le rôle qui lui convient est celui du disciple préféré; il le tient auprès de Favorinus, de Taurus, d’Antonius Julianus et aussi de Sulpicius Apollinaris.”

book is not some sort of obscure punishment meted out to our curiosity. But even as both images concern us, even as we scornfully entertain the idea of playing the role of Bias, Gellius and Favorinus would scare us away from such thoughts: they do not convert; there is a happy medium. Remember what great Ennius said about the middling.

Although I am confident that it will appear to some an abuse of even abusive logic to assert that Gellius is not just Gellius, a fixed figure just standing there neutral in the center, I nevertheless want to put this idea into circulation. Gellius offers multiple logics in parallel. He is a good father. He is a good friend. He is a good dinner guest. He is a good story (re)teller. And yet the stories he tells tell tales on him. He is a Euathlus. He is also a she and simultaneously a κοινή and a ποινή and a *stata*. The logic of narration and the narration of logic conjure alternate Gellii. These doubles and uncanny neighbors are certainly worth slaying from the standpoint of the dominant narrative voice, and yet the narrative stores of the *Noctes* keep on churning up stories of conversion that are themselves interconvertible even as such an activity is branded a vice of logic.

V

De argumentorum reciprocorum ambiguitate dico Gellium non eadem sentire et dicere.

The lemma for 9.12 is “Concerning bidirectional words that are spoken with opposite and converse meanings” (*De uerbis, quae in utramque partem significatione aduersa et reciproca dicuntur*). Gellius proceeds to enumerate a list of reciprocating words: *formidolosus* can be applied to the one who fears and the one who is feared, *inuidiosus* to the one who envies and the one who is envied. One can fear, envy, suspect, and toil over the list. And Gellius promises that there are plenty more where these came from should you want to curry favor with him and show your gratitude by asking for more.³¹

But as these words function, so functions *infestus*. It is, then, *strictu sensu*, an analogous case. It comes as no surprise, though, in light of Gellius’s

31. Vt “*formidolosus*” dici potest et qui formidat et qui formidatur, ut “*inuidiosus*” et qui inuidet et cui inuidetur, ut “*suspiciosus*” et qui suspicatur et qui suspectus est, ut “*ambitiosus*” et qui ambit et qui ambitur, ut item “*gratiosus*” et qui adhibet gratias et qui admittit, ut “*laboriosus*” et qui laborat et qui labori est, ut pleraque alia huiusmodi in utramque partem dicuntur, ita “*infestus*” quoque ancipiti significatione est. Nam et is “*infestus*” appellatur, qui malum infert cuiquam, et contra, cui aliunde impendet malum, is quoque “*infestus*” dicitur (9.12.1).

hostility to analogy, that the bulk of the remainder of the chapter will be dedicated to trotting out authoritative examples of the double, wheeling, and inverted meanings of this *genus* of words.

The first example of *infestus* that we see, though, is no mere example. Gellius gives us a history of the word that contains as well a history of his relationship to the word. It is this inverted history that I wish to explore. It offers an account of the birth of knowledge and the belated logic of scholarship that attaches itself after the fact to objects of knowledge in a manner that invites the fallacious syllogism *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.³²

Gellius, though he began with a dry and scholarly list, suddenly appears before us reading. He sees Cicero using *infestus* in an uncommon passive sense in the *Pro Cn. Plancio*. “Therefore” (*igitur*), Gellius sets himself to researching the origin and *ratio* of the word (9.12.6). With this *igitur* the logic of Gellian reading becomes retroactively clear. First, the old book is read for its very eld. Then an odd word is encountered accidentally (but on purpose). Then the word is sought in other books. Then it becomes part of the menagerie of this book.

Accordingly, the genealogy of the list of analogously reciprocating words at the head of the chapter is heterogeneous from the neutral *dici potest* at the chapter’s opening. Gellius was reading for any oddity, and this is the one that came up. *Quid dixit Cicero* has been rewritten as *quid dici potest*. The actual has sired the dogmatic declaration of a more general potentiality that subsumes it. Despite the addition that *nam et* signals, it is not that *infestus* is like *formidolosus* but rather that all the other words are like *infestus*. It is the somewhat irregular word that prompts the list of regularities. *Infestus* is the word that started it all. Or rather, reading an old book was the beginning of the beginning of the story of *infestus*. In the beginning of that story, Gellius says he sought out the beginning of the word’s own story, its *origo* and its *ratio*.

The logic of beginning one’s research dictates a trip to Nigidius’s authoritative researches into words. The old antiquarian is an ancient source of ancient sources. Nigidius says that *infestus* comes from *festinare*. We have already heard of the analogies to *infestus*; now we hear of its etymology. And even though etymology is a species of grammatical *ratio* that is generally maligned, this etymology is a hybrid of *ratio* and *auctoritas* given that Gellius is citing an ancient authority when he gives the etymology: this is the great Nigidius speaking. We can compare Caesar on the sands above:

32. The discussion of virtual objects at Deleuze 1994:102–3 offers another dimension in which to appreciate the philological investment in the fragment of the past and the repetition entailed in the act of “recovery.”

an old scholarly discussion of a word is tantamount to a genuine ancient citation of that word.³³

The *ratio* of a word is more than its analogous cases, more than its etymological birthplace. The *ratio* of a word includes its own account, its own *ratio*. The logic of antiquarianism, then, makes any comprehensive rendering of the *ratio* of a word include the account of the account of the word. That is, a comprehensive approach to a question of *ratio* implies as well *rationem reddere*. This entails *rationem rationis reddere*.

The logic of conversion and reciprocal action applies not just to the active/passive words but also to the activity of laying away these long-suffering words that were once so active in ancient tomes and are now mere passive bits of evidence for a contemporary scholarly account of those words. But these words therewith take on a new sort of life. The inverted logic of inversion allows for the passive recording of the history of words to double as an active intervention into that history. This intervention is “authoritative” to the extent that the history of words is transformed by the gesture. So, yes, the antiquarian attacks and is attacked, fears and is feared, flatters and is flattered.³⁴ But as these words function, so functions the scholar of words. It is, then, *strictu sensu*, an analogous case.

Antiquarian knowledge has an uncanny habit of redoubling *ratio*. A surplus of reasoning is characteristic not just of the accumulated *Noctes* as a whole but so too of the parts. For an antiquarian, there cannot be too many authoritative citations, too many reasons given, too many customary uses noted.³⁵ The concept of superfluity is eliminated. However, if antiquarian logic decrees that more is better, this conflicts with logical logic and its ruthless economy. For the logician there can be only one *logos*. For the antiquarian, the one inspires horror: *einmal ist keinmal; zweimal ist immer*. The

33. We can also hopefully refrain from footnoting, as does Rolfe 1927, that the etymology appears to be bogus and that *fendo* is the true sire of *infestus*. Rolfe also cites another *grammaticus* on the *fendo* question: “but this is rejected by Walde, who compares Gk. θάπρος.” We note a parallel compulsion to footnote in Marache 1978 and another bold gesture to Walde’s θάπρος. It remains vital, then, to be seen knowing not just “the right answer” but also the history of all answers.

34. Compare Whitmarsh 2000:310–11: “I shall argue that Athenaeus links flattery to a kind of reckless, voluptuous literary pleasure which is best exemplified by his own text.”

35. Gellius may claim he has seen books filled with trivia, but this is a critique of the specific topics covered, not archiving more generally. See also Preston 2001:95–96 and 117 on the proliferation of answers in Plutarch’s *Roman Questions*. In fact, this phenomenon is more pronounced in the *Roman Questions* than it is in the *Greek Questions*. See also Feeney 1998:128 on the *Roman Questions* of Plutarch and its relationship to Ovid’s *Fasti*. Feeney sees multiple interpretations for a single phenomenon as a more distinctively Roman predilection than a Greek one.

antiquarian believes only in the infinite and the eternal. He arrives second. He recurs for eternity.

If antiquarianism relishes the logic of the not-one and the not-once, consider, then, the ambiguous portrait of ambiguity in 11.12.³⁶ It is a short chapter and can be painlessly quoted in its entirety:

Chrysippus ait omne uerbum ambiguum natura esse, quoniam ex eodem duo uel plura accipi possunt. Diodorus autem, cui Crono cognomentum fuit: "nullum" inquit "uerbum est ambiguum, nec quisquam ambiguum dicit aut sentit, nec aliud dici uideri debet, quam quod se dicere sentit is, qui dicit. At cum ego" inquit "aliud sensi, tu aliud accepisti, obscure magis dictum uideri potest quam ambigue; ambigui enim uerbi natura illa esse debuit, ut, qui id diceret, duo uel plura diceret. Nemo autem duo uel plura dicit, qui se sensit unum dicere."

Chrysippus says that every word is ambiguous by nature since from the same word two or more meanings can be understood. But Diodorus—his surname was Cronus—said, "No word is ambiguous, nor does anyone speak or think anything ambiguously. And it ought not to appear that anything is being said other than that which a speaker thinks himself to be saying. But when it happens that I thought one thing and you understood another thing, it is possible for this to be seen as something spoken obscurely rather than ambiguously. [Otherwise] it ought to have been the case that the nature of the word was ambiguous and that consequently the one who used it said two or more things. However, nobody says two or more things when he thinks himself to say one thing."

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 11.12

We have, then, two accounts of how a word can mean two things. Or rather, we have two accounts of doubling, one of which accepts doubling while the other denies doubling.³⁷ The proposition of Chrysippus is a cornerstone of Stoic linguistics and is neither ambiguous nor obscure: every word means two or more things. Gellius, though, for reasons that remain obscure and—if we are allowed to use the term—ambiguous, adds on a second discussion. There is no commentary. All we have to go on is *autem*: "Diodorus, on the other hand, . . ."

36. Atherton 1993 offers an invaluable clear-headed appraisal of Stoic ambiguity and its philosophical stakes. See Atherton 1993:153 and 298–300 on this passage.

37. If you want a second chapter on doubling, see also 12.9, whose lemma begins, "Which words are called double . . ." (*Quae dicantur uocabula ancipitia . . .*).

First option: Is the Diodorus passage longer because it is less known? Though its content is explicit, has the history of its reception left it unclear? We could here adduce the economy of antiquarian accumulation: it is a rarer piece of knowledge and thus is more worth citing and recording. Second option: Is the Diodorus passage here at length because Gellius favors it? Certainly Diodorus argues directly against Chrysippus's opinion, and we do not get to hear from an orthodox defender of the original claim. Are we to infer that Gellius intended for us to give more credence to Diodorus? The proper conclusion to be drawn concerning the chapter remains ambiguous/obscure: either of these two reasons could be true.³⁸ Both could be true. This chapter is doubly/unclearly written. What was Gellius's intention? Did he think himself to say one thing when he said two things?

The core of the dispute between Chrysippus and Diodorus can be described as a shift of emphasis from reception (*accipi*) to intention (*sensit*). Yet this twofold split in the problem of signification remains a split at the end of Gellius's chapter: "How is one to take this?" and/or "What did Gellius mean?" Obviously, there is a strong pull here and throughout the *Noctes* to smooth over the rift: one should take things as they are intended. Antiquarian research into obscure words and passages is itself "intended" to recover the intentions of the ancient authors. There is, then, nothing ambiguous about the process: antiquarianism is a science of receiving intentions. Furthermore, the intention of the receiver of the past, the antiquarian, is to make clear the intentions of the past itself to the second-order receiver, the reader of the antiquarian.

On the one hand, Chrysippus said X is not-X; on the other hand, Diodorus said X is not-not-X. There is no space here to determine what Gellius means when he says "they said" given that Gellius has elided the words "Gellius said" as he foregrounds the speaking of these other subjects. The message of Gellius the medial figure becomes "the medial is not the message."³⁹ To the extent that Gellius is a "strong poet" who overcomes his predecessors, his strength lies specifically in his self-erasure.⁴⁰

38. Something Gellius has left out: antiquarianism can unambiguously be an affectation wherein one ostentatiously revels in obscurity. Quintilian chastises such in orators: *At obscuritas fit uerbis iam ab usu remotis, ut si commentarios quis pontificum et uetustissima foedera et exoletos scrutatus auctores id ipsum petat ex iis quae inde contraxerit, quod non intelleguntur. Hinc enim aliqui famam eruditionis adfectant, ut quaedam soli scire uideantur* (*Institutio oratoria* 8.2.12).

39. See Too 2000:123: "The 'walking library,' I suggest, is a figure who has effaced himself in order to become a cultural medium."

40. The terminology is from Bloom 1997. But even as I recognize the aggression of Gellius's passivity, I am more interested in Derridean erasure than in the Bloomian redemption

Gellius's position is paradoxical. The paradox of his position, though, corresponds to the twofold paradox of ambiguity that inheres within each branch of the two accounts of ambiguity. Chrysippus says that every word is ambiguous. There is, then, no ambiguity about ambiguity itself: other than *ambiguus*, all words mean two or more things. If "ambiguous" means more than "more than itself," then it would also mean "only itself" as well. Diodorus says that no word is ambiguous. There is nothing obscure about the case of ambiguity: the word means nothing. The nature of this word is not such that it produces two or more meanings, for, by nature, there is no double meaning. The unity of the intending subject demolishes the doubling of ambiguity, and it also evacuates the word itself.

Chrysippus's version of ambiguity is obscure: does he intend for the word "ambiguous" to mean one and only one thing? Diodorus's version of ambiguity is also obscure: "ambiguous" means both one thing and nothing whether he intends as much or not. There is a blind spot in both arguments. The logical crisis emerges when they are archived. The conundrum emerges as a function of a derivative and secondary approach to these propositions. Their raw juxtaposition without commentary invites the follow-up question, "Is X X?" If one turns back on these syllogisms and forces reciprocation, then a problem arises.

Appeal to the archivist and his hypothetical intentions does not help. Gellius has a double relationship to these same propositions. He is not the primary author of either proposition. He instead merely repeats both in their dogmatic clarity. But in repeating both he forces a captious moment: the chapter as a whole can be described as ἀντιστρέφον. That is, to archive these two contradictory items adjacently produces an ambiguity about obscurity and an obscurity about ambiguity. In fact, "Gellius" becomes the ambiguous and obscure thing that is no-thing; he is an invisible unity that is radically self-identical—an intending subject—and yet this same subject in its unity sires ambiguity. The hypothesis (ὑπό + θεσις) of authorial unity does nothing to prevent the setting down (θέσις) of a doubly double archival deposit-cum-proposition (θέσις). In the very act of raw transcription, Gellius reveals that no matter how unitary the *ratio* of an antiquarian might be, the *ratio* of antiquarianism itself is not only obscure and ambiguous, but it produces ambiguity and obscurity as a fundamental by-product of its research into and archiving of the singular truths of old texts.

of authorship. See Whitmarsh 2001 for a Bloomian take on the Second Sophistic. Contrast Vaahtera 1998:149. Following Vessey 1994, she effectively argues against entertaining radical ambiguity in Gellius. Instead, the main thesis is that Gellius believes that research into old words will restore their true meanings.

VI

De ambiguitatibus Gellii cursim retractatum est.

Gellius does not discuss the idea of recursion even if his own text is recursive. The notion of “conversion” circulates the idea of circulation and reasonably promulgates circular reasoning even as it decries it. But another way of looking at such issues would be to discuss recursion. What is recursion? For clarification, see the following glossary entry for “recursion”:

When a function calls itself, either directly or indirectly. If this isn’t clear, refer to the entry for “recursion.”

This definition is taken from “The GNU Awk User’s Guide.”⁴¹ It will be noted that the acronym GNU is itself recursive, as it stands for “GNU is Not Unix.”

Although a contemporary computer programmer would do well to take pains to avoid infinite loops and recursivity, an antiquarian’s project may well thrive in the presence of such involuted functions. For the goal of antiquarianism is not the input of data, the application of a set of calculations, and the output of a result. Humanistic research may at times describe itself as such, but in practice one sees instead that an antiquarian is as much interested in the process as the product. In fact, the distinction between raw material and result can be indistinct. A (re)reading of Varro becomes a (re)writing of Varro. Moreover, the products of antiquarian calculations themselves invite recalculation according to the same calculus. I say that Holford-Strevens says that Gellius says that Varro says. Each party in the chain claims an interest in “the right answer,” and each party has a somewhat different criterion of “rightness,” but every one of them redigests with relish the predigested results of earlier labors and thereby reinvokes the antiquarian-function. This function is a metafunction that takes place both with and after all other knowledge operations. The rules of reasoning employed by Gellius—what will count as knowledge? what is an adequate demonstration?—may well differ from our own, but the rule itself remains remarkably fixed, namely, a combination of authority, reason, and use generates knowledge. For example, is “The GNU Awk User’s Guide” an authoritative and reasonable source to invoke when engaging in the practice of a humanistic inquiry into the practice of ancient humanists?

Examples of Gellius’s recursive practice will be demanded. Here are two: first, many times is used many times (5.21); next, solecism is itself something

41. Free Software Foundation 2003.

of a solecism (5.20). *Proteron* let us linger with the *hysteron*. A Latin dictionary will tell us that the Latin word *solecismus* means σολοικισμός and that it also means “solecism.”⁴² A Greek dictionary will tell us that σολοικισμός means “solecism.” There are other entries too, of course, but these recursive definitions already point to a problem of the word. To know what this proper term for impropriety means you should already know what it means. But what is a solecism? A solecism is a linguistic error. For the erudite man, it is the word that he should never hear spoken of himself even as he secretly longs to use it of everyone else.⁴³

In Gellius 5.20 we are dealing with the right use of the word for wrong use. Gellius begins his discussion by citing an authoritative precedent for such a discussion:

“Soloecismus” Latino uocabulo a Sinnio Capitone eiusdemque aetatis aliis “inparilitas” appellatus, uetustioribus Latinis “stribiligo” dicebatur a uersura uidelicet et prauitate tortuosae orationis tamquam “strobiligo” quaedam. Quod uitium Sinnius Capito in litteris, quas ad Clodium Tuscum dedit, hisce uerbis definit: “Soloecismus’ est” inquit “impar atque inconueniens compositura partium orationis.”

Sinnius Capito and other men of his age called a *solecismus* an *imparilitas*. Still older Latin authors would call it a *stribiligo*, evidently from a twisting and deformation of tortuous speech as if it were some *strobiligo*. Sinnius Capito defined this failing (*uitium*) in a letter to Clodius Tuscus in these words: “A solecism is an unequal (*impar*) and incongruous assemblage of the elements of speech.”

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 5.20.1–2

Gellius’s definition includes, then, “Sinnius said the definition was . . .” Gellius’s definition includes not just another’s definition, though. It also encompasses a wandering history of definitions of the concept of error. One of these definitions is itself virtually self-defining: a *stribiligo* is a *strobiligo*. If a solecism is an inequality, then this equality/inequality of *stribiligo* and *strobiligo* only reproduces that same definition. Furthermore, if you go to the dictionary and look up *strobiligo*, you will find “s.v. *stribiligo*.” *Stribiligo*

42. See Baratin 1999:261–78: the difficulties surrounding solecism are neither (just) of Gellius’s making nor of my own. Quintilian insists that the erudite student of Latin appreciates that *barbarismus* has several distinct meanings (*Institutio oratoria* 1.5.7)

43. See Lucian’s *Solecista* for a mock-Platonic dialogue that ultimately makes us all so much the wiser about the sadism of the solecism game.

itself appears only here and in one other passage. In both cases the passage reads, “Older authors used to call a solecism a *stribligo*.” This unequal and incongruous assemblage of elements somehow adds up to a vital portion of the ill-fitting definition of ill-fitted elements of speech.

Cum Graecum autem uocabulum sit “soloecismus,” an Attici homines, qui elegantius locuti sunt, usi eo sint, quaeri solet. Sed nos neque “soloecismum” neque “barbarismum” apud Graecorum idoneos adhuc inuenimus; nam sicut βάρβαρον, ita σόλοικον dixerunt. Nostri quoque antiquiores “soloecum” facile, “soloecismum” haut scio an umquam dixerunt. Quod si ita est, neque in Graeca neque in Latina lingua “soloecismus” probe dicitur.

But even though “solecism” (*soloecismus*) is a Greek word, people ask if the Athenians, those paragons of pure speech, used it. For my part I have found neither *soloecismus* nor *barbarismus* in good Greek authors. They used σόλοικον as they did βάρβαρον. And I don’t know that the older Latin authors ever used *soloecismus* even if they readily used *soloecus*. If that is the case, then it is inappropriate to use *soloecismus* either in Greek or in Latin.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 5.20.3–7

The grammatical set asks itself again and again, “Can I use *soloecismus*?” Is the word for error itself erroneous? Are the correctors of error in need of correction? Gellius intervenes. Though compelled to repeat the words he would censor, he nevertheless expels *soloecismus* from the Latin language. Or rather, the word is expelled from the senate house of Latin and relegated to a shadowy demimonde of the *semidocti*, who will transgress every time they attempt to talk of transgression. The only place one should find the word is in this very discussion. If it is not being put on trial and found wanting, it should never be seen at all.⁴⁴ In our barbarous English tongue, we might translate *imparilitas* as “solecism,” but this -ism that we have borrowed from the Greeks we apparently borrowed from the wrong Greeks. Gellius will not let the Romans make the same mistake.

Gellius avoids the delicious irony of declaring “solecism” to be a solecism—the designation concerns phrases, not individual words. He nevertheless does the next best thing. “Solecism” is a barbarism. And here too we have to be careful: though you can find βαρβαρισμός in Greek, you need to say, as the Romans always do, *barbarus*/βάρβαρος. That is, the word

44. Compare Caesar’s *harenae* in the discussion of 19.8 earlier.

“barbarism” is itself a barbarism. The authors that one suitably reads, the *idonei*, in order to learn how to speak so as to win approbation (*probe*) never use this word.⁴⁵

However, I must withhold my own approbation, and I must emphatically declare that Gellius has not been reading suitable Greek authors. For Aristotle, when discussing errant words, uses βαρβαρισμός of the transgression.⁴⁶ Either Gellius is correct and Aristotle erred about error in a canonical passage about error, or Gellius erred in failing to read and recall this passage. And Gellius makes the same mistake about σολοικισμός itself: the word is also to be found in Aristotle, whose technical idiom probably predisposed him to the abstract -ισμός in both cases.⁴⁷ In any event, Gellius would have the scholarly diction of the “contemporary” scholar correspond to the nonscholarly diction of the nonscholars of the past.

The illogic of Gellius’s error about error, though, makes perfect sense when we go back to *quaeri solet*, “one is wont to ask.” Gellius is happy to hamstring scholarly discourse by insisting that one should use only the adjective and the adverbial forms of this word while banning the noun. And he is willing to make the sacrifice in order to be seen to be the man who has read all the old books and who is thereby able to make an authoritative pronouncement. The rational or analogical justification for both terms can be set to one side. And so too can their use-value as well as their actual use today (and forgotten use of yesterday). The most important thing is to say with authority, “No authority says *soloecismus*.” This authoritative decree also declares that the translation into Latin of the two Greek adjectives is legitimate, while the analogous translation of the two Greek nouns is illegitimate inasmuch as the nouns themselves are already illegitimate in Greek.

Though barbarous, Gellius’s practice is not itself a solecism: the learned man regularly fabricates his antiquarian knowledge in a cruel and exclusionary manner. But this same assemblage is more a semblance of rationality

45. *quaeri solet* . . . One wonders as well whether Fronto, the spiritual father of Gellius’s aesthetic, is joking or serious when he asks Marcus Aurelius to check his letter to Marcus’s mother for any *barbarismus* that might be in its Greek. Certainly, Fronto is being coy, but does he also mean to make an “error of error” joke, or is Gellius the one who has everything all wrong? See Fronto, *Epistulae ad M. Caesarem et inuicem* 2.2.8. The Greek letter itself apologizes εἴ τι τῶν ὀνομάτων . . . εἴη ἄκυρον ἢ βάρβαρον (2.3.5). That is, Fronto does not speak of τις βαρβαρισμός when he actually writes the Greek letter.

46. See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1458a25 and 31. The word also appears in Plutarch and Lucian, two other (would-be) good authors.

47. Σολοικισμός appears a number of times in Aristotle’s *Sophistici elenchi*. Gellius reads a lot more Aristotle than do most Roman authors, but it is not clear that he has read either the *Poetics* or the *Sophistical Refutations*: his favorite text to cite is the *Problemata*.

and a show of authority than it is in fact a positive substance. Antiquarianism is first and foremost a practice of authority that attempts to project its reasoning as the exclusive legitimate rationality. Everybody loves to ask this question of *soloecismus*, then, because it affords an opportunity to make a bid for recognition as the one who knows. It is a ball thrown out onto the field of play. The scholar chases after it with a vengeance and happily knocks aside his fellow players before they can do the same to him. The rules of knowledge are the rules of the game of knowledge. This is the game of authority where the winner effaces the very notion that this was a game in the first place. This cruel play clearly delights Gellius. It is threaded throughout the whole of the *Noctes* and perhaps animates the spirit of the whole.

This same recursive ironic logic of error continues in the very next chapter when Gellius discusses whether the many words for “many” are barbarous or good Latin. Gellius mentions, then, that a learned friend of his said *pluria* one day instead of *plura* (5.21.1). Gellius at once glosses the situation to make sure that we do not ourselves get upset at this good fellow. Gellius promises us that he was not showing off. Instead, says Gellius, he had just read too many books and his tongue had grown used to a word/voice (*uox*) that he had often read/heard in the course of his reading (5.21.3). This friend really does seem to be something of a second self: he too has blurred books and life.

And this book shows us what kind of life awaits those who entertain this slippage. A squabble promptly breaks out. An impertinent word-castigator (*reprehensor audaculus uerborum*) sees an opportunity and pounces: “Yes, a barbarism!” Gellius makes sure to discredit the fellow here and in the next clauses. He is a self-impressed dabbler who has a few bits of knowledge that he throws in the eyes of those upon whom he makes his attack (5.21.4). Gellius understands philology as combat, but he sees it as akin to gentlemanly wrestling in the *palaestra*, where dirty play produces defeat even where it begets technical victory. Gellius’s friend, though, smiles another of the cruel smiles of the *Noctes* (*ibi ille amicus ridens*; 5.21.6): he knew this was coming, and he is ready to pummel his attacker ruthlessly.

The friend makes a challenge: tell me why *pluria* and *compluria* are wrong when Cato, Quadrigarius, Valerius Antias, Aelius Stilo, Nigidius, and Varro are all the cosponsors (*subscriptores*) of this word-as-law (5.21.6).⁴⁸ The many words for many have many backers. The friend has marshaled

48. Recall, though, the hesitation about being the author of a grammatical law or even a *subscriptor* to it when Fronto discussed Caesar’s *De analogia* (19.8). Compare Bourdieu 1991:71–72 on differential relationships to the formalization of linguistic rules.

the leading men of the senate of Latin. The law, interestingly, is his own. The others merely assent to the proposition that *pluria* is a word for many used many times by good authors of the past. The original *scriptores*, the actual authors of archaic and legitimate Latin, are here relegated to a supporting role even though it is only that first act of theirs that can justify any claim to legitimacy on the part of the antiquarian friend.

There is something irrational to the friend's logic: the authority of his law is based on a manifest *petitio principii*. And yet the authority of grammatical inquiry in general appears to be predicated on a search for origins that begs the question of authority itself. This logic of antiquarian practice, though, is very much prized by Gellius. When it confronts the logic of a grammatical *ratio*, the latter is always shot down.

"You can keep those authorities of yours," shoots back the dabbler.⁴⁹ He has a rule that will depose them all, an absolute rule of grammatical law that can unseat any traditional aristocracy. Senators, meet Caesar: "No neuter comparative in the nominative plural has an *i* before its final *a*. Examples are *meliora*, *maiora*, *grauiora*. Accordingly, it is proper to say *plura* and not *pluria* lest there should be in the comparative an *i* before the final *a* in contravention of the perpetual form of such words (*contra formam perpetuam*)."⁵⁰ The *ratio* of the analogy is unstoppable. If Caesar was *dictator perpetuus*, the morphology of these plurals is likewise a timeless authority wielded by the overbearing grammarian.⁵¹

For once, though, Caesarism loses. This appropriation of his *rationes* does not prove to be authoritative. The friend of Gellius thereupon invokes "The GNU Awk User's Guide." How many times must one discuss many times in order to get some peace around here? He says, then, that there are many letters of Sennius Capito, "a most learned man" (*doctissimi uiri*) that have been gathered in the Temple of Peace. The very first letter has as its title, believe it or else, "*Pluria*, not *plura* should be used." In this letter Capito sets down some grammatical *rationes* whereby he shows that *pluria*

49. The phrasing is harsh and scandalous, and Gellius lets us know that we are dealing with a boor: *Atque ille nimis arroganter: "tibi" inquit "habeas auctoritates istas ex Faunorum et Aboriginum saeculo repetitas atque huic rationi respondeas"* (5.21.7). This closely parallels the scene discussed earlier: *At ille semidoctus grammaticus: "missas" inquit "auctoritates facias, quas quidem ut habeas, posse fieri puto, sed rationem dic, quam non habes"* (15.9.6).

50. *Nullum enim uocabulum neutrum comparatiuum numero pluratiuo recto casu ante extremum "a" habet "i" litteram, sicuti "meliora, maiora, grauiora." Proinde igitur "plura," non "pluria" dici conuenit, ne contra formam perpetuam in comparatiuo "i" littera sit ante extremum "a"* (5.21.8).

51. See again 19.8 and the discussion of it earlier.

is good Latin and that *plura* is barbarous.⁵² In an authoritative space, in a book by a pre- and reauthorized author, you will find the *ratio* that will assassinate your perpetual dictatorship of the *i*. The *ratio* of Capito is next summarized. And then the friend flogs his opponent with many citations of many. The chapter ends with the word/voice (*uox*) of Cato and a passage where *compluriens*, “many times,” is used many times in a single sentence. The friend has played a virtuoso fugue on the theme of “many” with consummate skill and mastery. Moreover, Gellius himself repeats many times throughout the *Noctes* performances of linguistic mastery that are restaged as the most reasonable form of authority. As with the whole, so the parts: the barbarity of solecism and the many repetitions of many are but proper moments (*probe*) of sound Latinity (*Latine*), and these moments are but recursive segments of the operation of the antiquarian-function itself.

VII

Ratione uitae sit compositura uocum?

The recursive logic of antiquarianism is clearly a sort of rationality infected by authority. That is, while today at least one pretends to long for “pure reason,” the ancient scholar imagines a sort of irrational chaos as a consequence of such an unprincipled principle. Either the uneducated mob will rule, or there will be a sort of dictatorship of the rule itself. Neither condition is tolerable. What were once political questions for the Romans—“Will Gracchus give away the *ager publicus* to the proletarians?” “Will Caesar manipulate the mob in order to arrogate all power to himself?” “What will become of the *boni*?”—have all been translated into linguistic questions for the Latinists: Is that author/word *classicus* and exclusive? Is that *ratio* legitimate? Who are the good authors, the good scholars of the good authors? Naturally, a politics of sorts subsists in this situation, but it is an odd reflection of the original political discourse. The general form of the political situation remains the same, but everything has become a mere image of the original: the words have displaced the things, the signs the signifieds, the shadows the substances. This politics of antiquarian representation participates in the older politics even as it becomes emblematic of a specifically contemporary political situation: one no longer fights about political representation, only about the politics of linguistic representation.

52. “Sinni” inquit “Capitonis, doctissimi ueri, epistulae sunt uno in libro multae positae, opinor, in templo Pacis. Prima epistula scripta est ad Pacuium Labeonem, cui titulus praescriptus est *pluria*, non *plura* dici debere. In ea epistula rationes grammaticas posuit, per quas docet ‘*pluria*’ Latinum esse, ‘*plura*’ barbarum” (5.21.9–11).

Philology has a way, then, of bounding philosophy.⁵³ Pure reason is critiqued by the scholar. The bookish set apply their *rationes* to the discourse of *ratio*, but only in such a way as to dispossess philosophy of its hegemonic claims. The problems of Aristotle are transformed into “*The Problems of Aristotle*.” The ideas contained within a book become a collection of ideas that can be expropriated and set inside another and very different book. The “play of ideas” is, in this sense, pure abstract play: the content of the ideas themselves remains secondary. In practice we shift swiftly over to “the play of signifiers.” However, this game is itself a matter of recursion: the game consists of establishing rules of play, authorized referees, and legitimate masters of the game. That is, it is a game about how to play a game that is made up as one goes along and by going along with it.

We have already touched on the issue of the double status of *uox*. It can mean either “the voice” or “a word.” In almost all other uses, *uox* is the thing itself, living speech, but in grammatical contexts it can be the image of speech and thus just “a sign (as reflected in speech).” But the problem of the voice is not just a problem I have invented to show the problematic status of signification in Gellius more generally. The problem of the voice is itself the object of one of Gellius’s own chapters. The lemma of 5.15 reads: “Is the voice a body, or is it bodiless? The philosophers have various sentiments about this” (*Corpusne sit uox an ἄσώματον, uarias esse philosophorum sententias*). Gellius starts by telling us that this is an old and unbroken (*perpetua*, again) topic of inquiry that has been bandied about by the most noble philosophers.

We start, then, with the credentials of the question and the people who examine the question. We are at a distance from the body of the question of the voice itself and are instead looking at the image of the question. Gellius continues by offering a catalog of positions taken and who took them. This also includes the remark that the Latin word *incorporeum* was invented to translate the Greek word ἄσώματον. A new *uox* was bodied forth to describe the incorporeal. And it is just this kind of body, the virtual body of the *uox*-as-sign that most fascinates Gellius. He remains indifferent to the answer to the question at hand: he wants to gather the various pronouncements and to be pronounced to have gathered them well rather than to himself reach a decision about the substance of the substantiality of the voice.

Gellius remains unaffected by the philosophical insistence that bodies

53. “What was philosophy has become philology.” See Porter 2000 for Nietzsche’s use of this maxim.

are either active or passive. Gellius's one-dimensional interest in words leaves him incurious about the philosophy of space and its three dimensions. Gellius streams forth a citation about Democritus on the stream of atoms, but this is but one reference of many, and one does ill to linger on its details. For after setting all this talk of talk into the body of his book, Gellius declares that when he heard such things or read them, he decided that they had nothing to do with the way one ought to live, with the *ratio uitae*. Instead, they all bring to mind a line of Ennius that deprecates philosophizing.

Gellius insists, then, on the value of moral philosophy in contradistinction to natural philosophy. This is how we are supposed to gloss the scene. And there are others like it, beginning with the learned attack on πολυμαθίη in the preface. But this observation remains incomplete. How one ought to live, a *ratio uitae*, is presumably related to how Gellius actually lives, or at least to the image of life that he offers in his book. But here we see that this is the image of a life of images, of a life lived among images of life. The "voice of Gellius" as embodied in the world of the Gellian *corpus*, the *Noctes* that is itself a collection of images of his life, says that we should not look closely into the contents of the question of the corporeal status of the voice. Instead, we should worry about the assemblage of voices, the *compositura uocum*. And this juncture of voices becomes but a single, long declaration as it is subsumed within the corpulent mass of the *Noctes*. That is, it becomes a *conueniens compositura partium orationis*. Any other logic-of-life is tantamount to living a solecism. Gellius sophistically refutes philosophy itself: philosophical talk of the voice is ultimately insubstantial no matter what the issue of the debate might be. Gellius himself thrives, though, on the nonissue of the debate and by gathering the debate-as-object. Or rather something much odder than Gellius is thriving here: "Gellius" thrives, the image of Gellius-embodied as embodied by the *Noctes* as image-of-life.

VIII

Qui de auribus disserat quas auris habeat scio. Ut Persius dixit: "uidi, uidi, ipse, libelle: auriculas asini quis non habet?"

If it sounds good, do it! Gellius has learned from a friend of Valerius Probus that the eminent man was asked about how one ought to form "cities" and "tower" in the accusative: is it *urbis* or *urbes*? *turrim* or *turrem*? The narrow question opens onto a broad theory as Probus replies that we can set aside those utterly rotten definitions and grammatical cesspools

and that we should instead consult our ear: it is the surest judge.⁵⁴ The language is very strong: away with vile pedantry! And Probus has already consulted his own tasteful ear even as he fashions a rule about the sovereignty of the ear. Probus used *fetutinas* instead of *foetutinas*: a cesspool by any other name would smell as rank, but it would not sound as sweet.

Probus's hapless interlocutor is not reassured. He is not sure he is ready to crawl out of the mire, for how, he asks, is he to consult his ear? Probus answers, in effect, "Easy, just be Vergil." The advice most assuredly falls under the heading of easier said than done. Probus does not give the desired "how"—he is too canny to fall into rule making, *finitiones* and *rationes*. Probus instead gives sample verses and notes that one could change the *urbis* in them to *urbes*, but that the result would somehow be more stupid and coarse.⁵⁵ *Je ne sais quoi*: the first refuge of scoundrels. A man of taste and distinction, a man of erudite discernment, such a man can just feel the right answer to this question.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, error means folly: *insubidus* is a word that is rare outside of Gellius but common in the *Noctes* as an indicator of hopeless failure and utter tactlessness.

Probus continues apace. He gives another verse where Vergil uses *urbes* instead of *urbis*. In this second case the word/voice (*uox*) would be too meager and bloodless if *urbis* were employed. And as Probus moves through examples of *turrim* and *securim* verses, we come to appreciate that a rule can be formed out of Probus's declarations: *i* is light, and *e* is heavy. Where the verse "needs" either effect, it should be used accordingly. Naturally, the diagnosis of need is to be left to the well-trained ear.

However, a failure to appreciate the logic of Probus's erudite practice allows Gellius to diagnose the ear of the questioner. The interlocutor says that he just does not see the distinction and the improvement in these various examples. Gellius introduces this comment with a cutting dismissal that reveals just what kind of ear our author has: "But that fellow who had asked the question, an assuredly coarse man with a hayseed's ear, said . . ."⁵⁷ Probus too recognizes that the fellow is hopeless and angrily answers his comment: "So don't worry about which of these you should say, *urbis* or *urbes*. I can see that you are that sort of man who can err without suffering

54. *non finitiones illas praerancidas neque fetutinas grammaticas spectaueris, sed aurem tuam interroga, quo quid loco conueniat dicere; quod illa suaserit, id profecto erit rectissimum* (13.21.1).

55. *Verte enim et muta, ut "urbes" dicas: insubidius nescio quid facies et pinguius* (13.21.4).

56. See Bourdieu 1984 on the general issue. See Porter 2005a for its role in ancient literary criticism.

57. *At ille, qui interrogauerat, rudis profecto et aure agresti homo* (13.21.7).

a loss: you lose nothing, whichever you say.”⁵⁸ A pauper has nothing to lose, and he is free to make whatever blunders he would like.

Gellius and Probus simultaneously dismiss the fellow (*dimisit*): he is hopeless and can’t be taught (*indocilis*). But Gellius most assuredly sticks around. Although the scene proper has ended and the curtain falls on the little drama of discernment and vulgarity, the chapter has not closed. Gellius tells us that he has found more examples of the phenomenon in question. In short, he is not unteachable: he has learned that one should run out and scour Vergil for similar lines. And now that he has found them, Gellius plays Probus to us, challenging our ear and defying us not to lend our approbation to Vergil’s masterful practice: “For he used both *tres* and *tris* in the same place and with such subtle judgment that if you were to speak otherwise and to change it and you nevertheless had any ear at all (*aliquid auris*), you would perceive that the pleasant quality of the sound limped.”⁵⁹

The chapter continues for some length, and Gellius reiterates Probus’s argument and his method. Change the line and your ear will balk, or, more literally, “spit it out” (*respuent aures*; 13.21.12). Things are somehow better this way: *nescio quo pacto* in 13.21.12 mirrors Probus’s *nescio quid* in 13.21.4. Gellius’s catalog expands out from Vergil, though. And now Ennius and Cicero are both discovered to have had the same good ear. Your ear for an author’s ear allows you to hear just how excellent the both of you are.

The rustic ear above gave its owner a curious sort of liberty: he was free to err without loss; *peccare* did not imply *iactura* in his case. But now we see that “errors” involving the word for error can actually yield dividends. Gellius has seen a manuscript of Cicero’s *Verrines* in which one reads *manifesto peccatu* instead of *manifesto peccato* (13.21.16). Although to some it might seem a manifest error to use this form of the word “error” when writing the phrase “manifest error,” Gellius decrees that this is manifestly good Latin: “In the case of this word both its sound is more elegant in this passage and its *ratio* is definite and well established. *Hic peccatus* as if derived from *peccatio* is proper and good Latin.”⁶⁰ Gellius then trots out some parallels to *peccatus* in order to establish the *analogia* and thereby to ground

58. *Tum Probus iam commotior: “noli” inquit “igitur laborare, utrum istorum debeas dicere, ‘urbis’ an ‘urbes.’ Nam cum id genus sis, quod uideo, ut sine iactura tua pecces, nihil perdes, utrum dixeris”* (13.21.8).

59. *Nam et “tres” et “tris” posuit eodem in loco ea iudicii subtilitate, ut si aliter dixeris mutauerisque et aliquid tamen auris habeas, sentias suauitatem sonitus claudere* (13.21.10).

60. *Huius autem uocis cum elegantior hoc in loco sonus est, tum ratio certa et probata est. “Hic” enim “peccatus,” quasi “peccatio,” recte Latineque dicitur* (13.21.19).

the *ratio*.⁶¹ He closes, though, with an appeal to the ear: Cicero could have said *peccato* here, but *peccatu* produces a more subtle quality and one more gentle to the ear (*ad aurem mollius*). The transgression of *ratio* in the case of *peccatus* reveals a more subtle logic of transgression: those able to arrogate to themselves the mantle of subtle apperception will thereby be able to impose their cultural sovereignty.

Sin boldly, indeed. But let one's faith be more bold still. Ear-power is nigh unto absolute. Lucretius also proved a slave to the ears (*auribus inseruiens*; 13.21.21). Cicero is even ready to toss out *ratio* and *consuetudo* and just follow the ear (13.21.22) in an act of blind but not deaf faith. Gellius cites a passage from Cicero's *Orator* about the good ear to back up Cicero's own practice in the *Verrines*.

"Quod qui non sentiunt," inquit idem ipse M. Cicero, cum de numerosa et apta oratione disserteret, "quas auris habeant aut quid in his hominis simile sit, nescio."

"Those who do not perceive this," said that very same Cicero when he was offering a dissertation on metrical and rhythmic prose, "baffle me: what ears do they have or what in them resembles a man?"

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 13.21.24⁶²

Quod ego sum, id tu non es. Homo autem ego sum. Homo igitur tu non es. The man-of-ears can convert this captious syllogism into a positive piece of logic. The uneducated and ineducable ear of the other can be dismissed. The tone-deaf are not even human.

The chapter as a whole teaches a sort of aural docility more generally. The authoritative ear has an ear for authority. Knowing how to hear Vergil means knowing how to write up an authoritative account of Vergil. Though masterful, the discourse of Probus is thoroughly passive. There is a very simple *ratio* to his reasoning and its refusal of grammatical *rationes*: if Vergil did it that way, then that was the way to do it. Gellius merely compounds the issue. He is taught the lesson of the unteachable ear: he fully

61. Conversely, Quintilian is happy to divide *recte* from *Latine* if it comes to it: "And so I find this to be a charming observation: it is one thing to speak Good Latin and another to speak School Latin. And this is more than enough on the topic of analogy" (*Quare mihi non inuenuste dici uidetur aliud esse Latine, aliud grammaticae loqui. Ac de analogia nimium; Institutio oratoria* 1.6.27).

62. The quote is taken from *Orator* 168. It also "ends" the body of the chapter, although there is a "footnote" in the next section on the phonological criticism of the same phenomenon in Homer.

appropriates to himself the ear of Vergil as he heard the lesson from Probus. He recapitulates the lesson he heard and arrays for us a series of challenges to our own ear. Dare we question the authorities he cites? Dare we question the rules he cites? Dare we question the violation of precedent? *Auctoritas*, *ratio*, and *usus* are all mustered for the occasion. And *auctoritas* becomes radically augmented. The authorities we heed themselves were beholden to a higher authority. They were slaves to their ears and were ready to cast out the other two principles of good Latin in the name of the genteel pleasures of that insatiate organ.

Though “illogical” on the one hand, the logic of antiquarianism makes perfect sense on the other. The logic of practice never dissociates itself from the practice of logic. Similarly, the authority of logic is always bound to the logic of authority. The reasoning is pointedly impure. The paradoxes of antiquarian reason remain unexpected only to those who remain outside the game of scholarly reasoning itself. There is an economy of sophistry at work here: some profit; others lose; knowledge circulates according to rules-that-are-not-rules. One of the founding rules of the game is that one must deny that the game could possibly have rules, or, for that matter, that it is even a game. A life of the mind and/or unthinking life of the ear comes together out of the assembly of disparate pieces of knowing artfully re-deployed. There are pieces of pieces, comments on comments, and other involuted figures. These recursive functions may seem to us to produce an infinite loop that goes nowhere. But for the antiquarian they yield instead a glorious fractal landscape, a photorealistic virtual reality in which books make men and men books, and all gather together at the table/table of contents for an infinite feast.

LIBER TERTIVS



Vsus

I

At ille non ibat infitias fecisse, sed id solitum esse fieri defendebat turpitudinemque delicti exemplorum usu et consuetudinis uenia deprecabatur.

As with *ratio*, so with *usus*: the case is analogous. The uses of the word “use” are many and varied. They cover a number of semantic fields. There are various idiomatic phrases in which the word participates. *Usus* is the actual use of a thing or the means of potentially using a thing. This use can be both general or legally specific: as mentioned earlier, the right to receive profits from another’s property is *ususfructus*; continuous possession and use that establishes ownership rights is *usucapio*. *Usus* also has a worldliness to it and embraces the way one usually does things. Accordingly, it covers specific, general, or habitual practices. The prospective sense of *usus* also appears in cases where it means utility, function, or need.

Several recursive issues arise concerning the logic of use. As an actual performance (in contradistinction to a theory), antiquarianism makes use of *auctoritas*, *ratio*, and *usus* as tools that have a utility when it comes to satisfying the practical needs of a scholar. But the same sentence can be rewritten with different terms at its head: As a rational system (in contradistinction to mere practice) . . . As an authoritative discourse (in contradistinction to mere practice) . . . Moreover, the continuous possession of the ancient authoritative texts yields a *usucapio* that gives the antiquarian an authority of his own. And if one chooses to instead speak of sanctioned profits arising from the legitimate rational treatment of old texts, we are then discussing *usufructus* arising from authoritative *ratio*.¹

1. Compare the use of the economic metaphor in Bourdieu 1991:37–102.

It is clear, then, why I have chosen to use *usus* throughout this study rather than *consuetudo*. The latter word is more specifically just “common use,” while the former is used for more than just “common use.” In fact, *consuetudo* rapidly takes on a negative valence and evokes the unreflective habits of the horde.² And one has the strong sense that a phrase like “the habitual use of the ignorant mob” (*consuetudo inperiti uulgi*; 19.13.3) is virtually tautologous for men like Gellius.³ For example, most people use the word *uestibulum* without really knowing what they are saying (16.5).⁴ And there is a sort of pathos to such victories won by the forces of (bad) habit.⁵ Conversely, *usus* can be applied to the fair as well as the foul. I have, then, used the less-used word for common usage to suit my own uses.

I would like to leverage the many uses of “use” in Gellius in order to explore some of the more irrational aspects of his antiquarian archive.⁶ These habits of thought and usual scholarly usages produce a practice that makes sense within the world of scholarship—itsself a sense-making activity, of course—even as logical logic balks. These various uses weave together in the *Noctes* a text that offers a sense of its own context. And within this self-weaving context we come to see both the authority of scholarly use and the use of scholarly authority. We will read Gellius reading. We will read Gellius writing. We will visit parties, sail the seas, travel in a carriage. And from this we will attempt to arrive at a sense of the usual and the regular within Gellius’s usages. The net result, though, will be a paradoxical logic of subjunctive time that proves to be both useful and usual within antiquarianism.

2. Varro defines analogy thus: *analogia est uerborum similium declinatio similis non repugnante consuetudine co<m>muni* (*De lingua Latina* 10.74). He then glosses the part about *consuetudo* with a contrast between *consuetudo* and *usus uetus*: *adiectum est “non repugnante consuetudine co<m>muni,” quod quaedam uerba contra usum ueterem inclinata patietur* (10.78). See also Holford-Strevens 1988:131–32 on the double aspect of “common use,” old *consuetudo* vs. new *consuetudo*, in Gellius.

3. Atherton 1998:233 explores the conceptual slide from habit to vulgar bad habit in other authors.

4. The chapter does not actually use *consuetudo* and in fact is addressed to the problem of thoughtless men of learning. But the governing conceit is that without reflection and study one falls into the “vulgar” habits of the many. It will be recalled that Caesar’s vestibule is the other association the word has in the *Noctes*.

5. See 12.13.16: *Sed nimirum consuetudo uicit, quae cum omnium domina rerum, tum maxime uerborum est.*

6. Similar but different: note how Pliny the Elder explicitly plays with *usus* as it relates to the use he has made of his sources: *sors fiat ex usura*, principle arises out of interest paid on a debt (*Naturalis historia* pr. 23). That is, his borrowed book, which scrupulously repays what it owes, nevertheless yields a new kind of self-standing capital. See Murphy 2004:49–73 on the various resonances of “commodification” as a metaphor for Pliny’s knowledge. Murphy 2004:63–66 discusses this specific passage.

However, one cannot “merely” explore the use of use. The neutrality of such a phrase conceals an element of our own scholarly habits and practices that diverges from those of Gellius and even the despised grammarians. All parties are interested in authoritative Latin. Gellius claims that his uses of Latin authorities point us toward authoritative Latin. The grammarians are interested in a set of authoritative rules that allow one to speak authoritative Latin.⁷ However, the rules of knowing have shifted fundamentally in our own era. Knowledge is much more self-authorizing now. The very knowability of a thing virtually commands that it be known: a newly discovered, well-preserved Roman latrine would be greeted with an enthusiasm that could only amuse those who once used it. One is today very uncomfortable in the face of the authority folded into the original object: things should be surveyed in a neutral and comprehensive manner.

The contemporary man-of-ears will listen to one and all. In fact, he must listen to one in all. This ear is self-pleasuring only by way of a paradox. After one has heard all, one will know all, and this gives pleasure. The pleasure, though, involves a return of authority. Knowing all will allow for the formulation of the authoritative account, an account deaf to the special pleadings of the authorized authors of old. The modern antiquarian knows better for knowing all. One reads everything. One notes everything. If Gellius knows what not to read, we know that there is nothing that can go unread.

Incapable of objectifying their own practices in anything but an incomplete manner, the ancients need the moderns to gather and comb through their uses in order to find the true *ratio* of their habitual acts, the logic of their practices.⁸ We dispossess antiquity of itself to serve our own ends. If there is an irony in Gellius’s relationship to *usus*, *usucapio*, and *usufructus*, it is still more ironic that our own rereadings of antiquity subsist within the same general economy of conversion between the three registers of *usus*, *ratio*, and *auctoritas*. We have, though, reconfigured the hierarchies among them. We generate our *auctoritas* via an appeal to a *ratio* that posits discontinuity with the past in the name of an objective position from which to chart *usus*. Knowledge demands of us that we shred our originals

7. Compare Atherton 1998:242–44: these schoolhouse rules are the first concrete encounter elite youths have with the politics of linguistic distinction. The critique of grammar is all part of getting older and/or becoming more entitled and then returning to the same game of distinction in a new role. The basic game itself does not shift.

8. See Bourdieu 1990:30–41 for critical remarks about objectification, “the epistemological unconscious of structuralism” (31) and the danger of “the fetishism of social laws” (41).

and reassemble them. Gellius's lively life of the mind once asked the same of him.⁹

Einmal ist keinmal; zweimal ist immer. The unique, the radical, the new: such a monster of use cannot be used. Everything that happens happens because it is usual. It was destined to happen and, moreover, to happen again. The rule is "One cannot be a rule." The singular cannot be regular and the subject of regulatory commentary. Throughout this *Nox* I have been at pains to offer citations of use, to document the regular, to footnote the parallels. The net result is a portrait of the *Noctes* as regular despite the seeming irregularity: I efface *disparilitas* even as I praise the radical possibilities of such an aesthetic. I catalog the regularity of the pattern of use of the stem *dispar* in order to show how everything evens out in the end for the word "uneven." It is a word like any other and ruled by the rules of language. The phrase ἀπαξ λεγόμενον should never be uttered, not even once.¹⁰

Einmal ist keinmal; zweimal ist immer. But it is not just the word that must repeat itself twice; the speaker of the word also has to recur. It is compulsory. And for present purposes, the hearer of the word must also appear two times and therewith forever. Much as Gellius himself as a specific kind of reader creates a unified disunity by reading and writing so variously, the commentary on Gellius produces a unified unity out of this disunity. I jump around in Gellius as he jumps around in the library, but only to undo the effect of those first leaps: "See, four books later he does the same thing in another chapter." Gellius himself always happens twice and forever.

II

Quod Gellius in libris symposiacis quaestiones ancipites lepide agitare solitus est.

"We were celebrating the Saturnalia in Athens . . ." Chapter 18.2 opens as did 18.13. Gellius says that among his circle the task of playing host circulates, that each man hosts a dinner in his turn. Gellius insists here as well that a good party is a learned one, "for, as Musonius says, to loosen your wits is to lose them."¹¹ Even Gellius's calls to study are studied, and his bad

9. "Representing the past as fundamentally 'different' involves projecting it at some level, however occluded, as also fundamentally the 'same'" (Kennedy 1993:41).

10. An exercise for the reader: research how many times the phrase actually does occur in extant Greek literature. How many times outside the commentators on Homer? One could pen an epyllion on the issue.

11. *nam "remittere" inquit Musonius "animum quasi amittere est"* (18.2.1).

puns have good pedigrees. Again we behold a game of erudition. A number of questions equal to the number of guests will be asked. A prize is offered: a book by an old author along with a laurel crown. The order in which one is called upon is aleatory, or rather, it is decided by lot.

The list of topics on which one might be tested is tantamount to a table of contents to the *Noctes* itself: "A pleasantly but not painfully obscure idea in an old poet, an investigation into a matter of distant history, the exculpation of some philosophical maxim that has been commonly misunderstood, the solution to a sophistical *captio*, the tracking down of an unexpected or rather rare word, an obscure tense of a well-known word."¹² Peter Steinmetz provides a list and a table of types of chapters in the *Noctes*, and his general overview fits neatly with this particular passage.¹³

After giving us the rules of the game, Gellius recounts the set of questions from one evening when seven were asked. The meal and its questions have become the book and its questions. Significantly, Gellius repeats only the questions and not the answers to them. That is, the reader is invited to play the dinner-table game all over again and to determine the proper response to each of the challenges Gellius sets before us. The economy of the feast, though, has shifted. Where once seven gathered and asked one another, now Gellius gathers the seven into one chapter and as a lone voice repeats them to the reader, a lone guest who is not invited to put a question to him in return. Gellius's translators and commentators will footnote the various questions and provide answers to as many of them as they can. Accordingly, the scholar is the guest who gets the questions right and wins a crown and an old book as a prize, namely, this very old book, the *Noctes* itself. The good scholar thus comes into full and legitimate possession of the same good scholarship about which he or she is reading.

The context echoes the text: as was the party, so is the book. But this same correspondence extends down into the puzzles themselves. The first question is a challenge for an explanation (*enarratio*) of the many uses of the word *frustrari* in some verses of Ennius (18.2.7). Can, that is, the questioner/Gellius "frustrate" the cleverness of the auditor/reader with these hard verses? But the verses themselves are already playing the same game. They

12. *Quaerebantur autem res huiuscemodi: aut sententia poetae ueteris lepide obscura, non anxie, aut historiae antiquioris requisitio aut decreti cuiuspiam ex philosophia perperam inuulgati purgatio aut captionis sophisticae solutio aut inopinati rariorisque uerbi indagatio aut tempus item in uerbo perspicuo obscurissimum* (18.2.6). Compare Lukinovich 1990:254–65 on Athenaeus: the same sorts of genteel topics appear in that feast as well.

13. Steinmetz 1982:282–83. Steinmetz also shows how the opening chapters of the first book of the *Noctes* artfully vary between types.

are clearly composed as a puzzle. They are not puzzling because they are unintentionally obscure. The old verses are themselves composed in the idiom of table-talk questions and answers. That is, there is an implied sort of party in the text of Ennius that gets repeated at a party where Gellius was present and then turned into the text of the quasi party, the *Noctes*.

The first of the four quoted verses begins, “He who elegantly seeks to deceive another, . . .” (*nam qui lepide postulat alterum frustrari, . . .*). *Lepide* is a virtual code word for the bookish set, a sort of antiquarian “bravo!” If you can thwart the other guest, then one could say *lepide* of the successful “frustration.” The tongue- and brain-twister of the remaining three verses plays off active and passive: done, done to, fooled, fooler, which is which? There is no clear boundary between the world conjured by the verses, the world in which the verses are deployed for potential deceit, and the deceitful text in which they now find themselves all over again. There is something genteel in letting yourself be taken in by a text and/or in cheating others with it. Of course, today one thinks of Gellius as anything but a *lepidus* author.¹⁴ But maybe we’re just fooling ourselves.

Second question: what did Plato mean in the *Republic* when he spoke of κοινὰς γυναικας (18.2.8)?¹⁵ The question of women held in common becomes the common property of the men at the table. The citation swappers swap ideas about Platonic wife swapping. The third question is a set of three logical *captiones*. There is an odd metalogical puzzle here as well, a *captio* about *captiones*: the third question was three questions. Were the three questions really three or just one?

What was the third question that was three? First, we have the famous “horns” puzzle: “What you have not lost you have. You have not lost horns . . .” (18.2.9) And we have an “I am lying” paradox (18.2.10). Tucked between these two we find *quod ego sum, id tu non es*. The *captio* is here just one of several. It is simply enumerated. Gellius says that this was asked. We are invited to answer it for ourselves here and now, or not. As we have already seen, though, this very *captio* is addressed later in the *Noctes* at 18.13. The puzzle of how to deal with this specific puzzle is ultimately unraveled. This leaves the impression that the whole of the *Noctes* is a protracted

14. Apuleius, though, reeks of charm. Moreover, one notes that in his catalog of literary activities, “riddles” makes the list: *sed pro his praeoptare me fateor uno chartario calamo me reficere poemata omnigenus apta uirgae, lyrae, socco, coturno, item satiras ac <g>riphos, item <h>istorias uarias rerum nec non <o>rationes laudatas disertis nec non dialogos laudatos philosophis atque haec <et> alia [et] eiusdem modi tam Graece quam Latine, gemino uoto, pari studio, simili stilo* (Apuleius, *Florida* 9.27–28).

15. Compare the *captio* of Bias discussed earlier and its puzzle about the woman who was κοινή (5.11). Now it is the word κοινή itself that taxes our wits.

dinner party.¹⁶ The questions are put and answered not just in a local sense, but so too does this happen from a more global perspective.

The fourth question is a matter of feasting. Why is it that the patricians entertain one another during the Megalensia and the plebeians during the Cerealia? Left to one side is the question of how and why the antiquarians entertain one another during the Saturnalia. But for this we have the evidence of the chapter itself and indeed the whole of the *Noctes*. Moreover, Macrobius's Saturnalian rewriting of Gellius in his *Saturnalia* shows that he has reflected on the learned question of learned feasting very carefully. Macrobius makes manifest a latent truth of the whole of Gellius.

The fifth question: Which old poet said *uerant*, that is, "they tell the truth"? Can you tell the true story of the truth? The answer, of course, will be not "the truth itself" but rather an authoritative citation. And yet the citation of authority is its own species of truth in the *Noctes*.

The sixth question: what is asphodel in the quoted verses of Hesiod? And yet the verses themselves tease the one who cannot answer correctly. Hesiod said, "Fools, they know not by how much the half is greater than the whole, nor the great profit in mallow and asphodel."¹⁷ Only a fool does not know what Hesiod meant when he talked of fools and asphodel. And that is only the greater half of a lesser whole: the profit of asphodel lies not just in itself but also in its exchange as a token of erudition. Knowing-asphodel is itself the advantage that inheres in asphodel centuries later.

After the verses are cited, we get a little surprise. Gellius mentions another question. The second and potentially greater half of the whole sixth question is, then, "What did Hesiod think he was saying when he said that the half was greater than the whole?"¹⁸

All the questions, then, have their ironies. But the seventh question is the most involuted of all. The final question is What is the tense of *scripserim*, *legerim*, and *uenerim*? Are they past or future, or both? (*Postrema quaestionum omnium haec fuit: "scripserim," "legerim," "uenerim" cuius temporis uerba sint, praeteriti an futuri an utriusque*; 18.2.14). These verbs will haunt us for quite some time, but let me attempt to answer this simple challenge right off and win a prize: these are first-person singular perfect subjunctive active verbs, "that I have written; that I have read; that I have come."

16. On captiousness as play, see also Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 45.8. Seneca claims that it is wisest not to bother with such *captiones*: it's all a big game (*lusus*) that distracts us from the serious business of philosophy.

17. νήπιοι, οὐδὲ ἴσασιν, ὅσῳ πλέον ἤμισυ παντός, | οὐδ' ὅσον ἐν μάλαχῃ τε καὶ ἀσφοδέλῳ μέγ' ὄνειαρ (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 40–41).

18. *et quid item Hesiodus se dicere sentiat, cum dimidium plus esse toto dicit* (18.2.13).

Although *scripseris* could be either a perfect subjunctive or a future perfect indicative, *scripserim* should be distinguished from *scripsero*, “I will have written.” I am surprised to have been asked such a trivial and obvious question . . . Or were you trying captiously to trick me into this answer? It is possible to construct a sentence where *scripserim* has a future sense owing to a combination of grammatical features. In fact, I recall that Cicero wrote to Sittius: *De tuo autem filio uereor ne, si nihil ad te scripserim, debitum eius uirtuti uidear testimonium non dedisse, sin autem omnia quae sentio perscripserim, ne refricem meis litteris desiderium ac dolorem tuum.*¹⁹ Now do I get that garland?

But let us pretend that we do not know in advance the answer to this question. Let us play along with the party game for a moment. The choice of verbs and the choice of person are evocative. We have another example that hardly seems like a mere example. Has Gellius written, will he have written? Has Gellius read, will he have read? Has Gellius arrived, will he have arrived? The meditation upon Gellius’s untimeliness will be our final question. Of course, it has related questions. Let us ask them here but answer them in a later chapter.

Who is the “I” of these verbs? *Scripserim*: Is this (1) Gellius the author of the *Noctes*, (2) Gellius the narrator of the *Noctes*, or (3) Gellius the character seen writing within the *Noctes*? Are the three questions really three? Are the three Gellii really three? Is the writing over and done with or to come? That is my first question.

Here is my second question. In *legerim* is the “I” Gellius the reader? And which of the preceding three Gellii have read/will have read? In *uenerim* is the “I” Gellius the reader/writer? Has he/have they already arrived, or will he/they have arrived? Is this second question one question or two?

Third question: Is this “I” me, the author of “Gellius the author, Gellius the narrator, and Gellius the character”? Me the narrator of those three? Me the character who emerges in the course of the story of their story? Are the three questions of the three characters really three?

Is there an answer to the questions of the final questions? For now it is hard to say. Gellius’s chapter ends with a different kind of answer. Gellius himself says nothing about the narratological *captio* his list of difficult verbs yields. He instead returns to the fifth question. This question of the truth was the one question that went unanswered at the party. And it is the one question to which Gellius actually gives the answer in the *Noctes*. Nobody, he says as the chapter ends, could answer the question about *uerant* (18.2.15–16).

19. Cicero, *Ad familiares* 5.17.4.

Nobody, he says, could remember that Ennius had used the word in his *Annales*, where it is asked, “Do prophets in their life’s course tell truth enough?” (*satin uates uerant aetate in agunda*). In the course of his philosophical life as recorded in/by the *Noctes*, did Gellius tell enough truth, and were we able to give sufficient ear to his prophecies?

III

Ego de te ad Caesarem quam diligenter scripserim, tute scis; quam saepe, ego.

Gellius has three habitual acts that I would like to track: he reads; he writes; he has arrived/is present. In the last instance he is usually a hearer. He listens to the fruits of others’ bookish labors, and he writes them down. There are clear connections between each of the three activities: reading books leads to excerpting them, and this in turn provides the material for one’s own book. Conversely, Gellius the writer imagines being read much as he read others. Similarly, the places he goes and the people he sees are almost invariably connected with the production, consumption, and distribution of knowledge. For example, and it is, of course, no mere example, a party consumes books, distributes books, and gets written up in a book. But what if there were no party to begin with, just the textual image of a party? The absence of a real referent makes little difference to the imaginary sympotic economy of erudition more generally: it is always possible to imagine discussing at some learned feast yet to come which parties in books were in fact real parties.²⁰

IV

Est, fatebor, aliquid tamen; ut, cum in sole ambulem, etiam si ego aliam ob causam ambulem, fieri natura tamen, ut colorer, sic, cum istos libros ad Misenum—nam Romae uix licet—studiosius legerim, sentio illorum tactu orationem meam quasi colorari.

Gellius the reader is an omnipresent figure in the *Noctes*. This character is introduced to us early on in the preface, and he returns time and again throughout its chapters. “That I have read” is an enabling condition of the text as a whole. We have already seen Gellius reading on a number of

20. See Holford-Strevens 1988:47–51 on the bogus air to a number of Gellius’s reports of parties and conversations. Holford-Strevens attempts to determine which episodes are more likely based on fact and which are likely fictional. Steinmetz 1982:281–82 appreciates that such a project is unlikely to succeed. He notes that the book-as-life and life-as-book distinction is pointedly blurred in Gellius.

occasions. And we can claim that, in general, Gellius does not read as a “humanist” of our own era reads. To modern tastes there is something horrifying about Gellius as a reader. He seems like nothing so much as a misreader.²¹ His literary interpretations are virtually nonexistent and are overbroad when present.²² It is unclear that Gellius has a sense of the history of Rome in the abstract as opposed to a knowledge of the particulars of some obscure details.²³ Gellius’s relationship to philosophy comes off as dilettantish at best.²⁴ In practice Gellius is obsessed first and foremost with the individual word. He mines his texts.²⁵ Marache notes that if one were to simply rearrange the chapters of the *Noctes*, you could generate a sort of dictionary of obscurities done in alphabetical order.²⁶ The hunt for words takes precedence over most other styles of reading.

Gellius the reader is a figure that is interspersed throughout the *Noctes*. Texts are constantly being consumed and commented upon. The moment of reading offers the explicit or implicit antecedent of innumerable chapters. Some chapters even begin in the library: we were looking over some old books, when . . .²⁷ The archives are imperial, and thus research is done in Tiberius’s library and the library of Trajan’s temple.²⁸ It is a small point, but worth noting nonetheless. Much as knowledge is redistributed on Caesar’s doorstep, so too is it consumed in various buildings he has erected. The public space of knowledge has been subjected to a centralizing force. Private

21. Further, Gellius does not clearly distinguish between things he has heard and things he has read. We tend to segregate the one kind of knowledge from the other.

22. Marache 1952:238–43 discusses how Gellius feels a sort of spontaneous pleasure in the face of “the archaic” without ever offering an abstract account of the hows and whys of his method.

23. Holford-Strevens 1988:178–80 is venomous in his appraisal of Gellius’s relationship to history.

24. Holford-Strevens 1988:192 is happy to declare authoritatively Gellius’s incomprehension of logic and natural science: “They were not beneath his cognizance but above his head.”

25. Compare Fronto, *Ad M. Caesarem et inuicem* 4.3.6 on chopping words from the quarry vs. mining and working precious word-gems. Seeking out words, *uerba quaerere*, is the major motif of the letter as a whole.

26. Marache 1952:218.

27. See 11.17 and 13.20.

28. The advent of public libraries, a feature of the imperial age, transforms the possible relations to books. Originally social connections were an important constraint on access to texts. See Murphy 2004:13–15 on the “imperial” quality of Pliny’s encyclopedic work: the public library and the encyclopedia of the Roman world rise in tandem. See Murphy 2004:197 on Caesars and libraries. See Jacob 2000 both on libraries and on the bibliophilic impulses of Athenaeus. Jacob 2000:102 sees in Gellius’s trips to the library an important *comparandum* for Athenaeus himself.

libraries remain, and readers love to collect, but one suspects that Caesar's libraries are regarded as being the first among equals.²⁹

But occasionally Gellius wants to show us how he reads at some length.³⁰ The comparison of Menander and Caecilius in 2.23 offers a unique opportunity for the contemporary scholar to see the same scene rendered by a Greek and a Latin comic poet. "We regularly read," begins Gellius, "Roman comedies derived and translated from Greeks like Menander, Posidippus, Apollodorus, Alexis, and certain other comic authors."³¹ The "we" can be understood as "I," but the plural number and the iterative aspect of the verb have a broader force: Gellius's disposition is not just his own, nor is his habitual practice only his personal habit. Gellius remarks that the Roman poets seem pretty good when one reads them, and one is inclined to attribute to them terms of aesthetic commendation: *lepide et uenuste scriptae uideantur* (2.23.2). In fact, "you would think" (*censeas*) that nothing could be better. Were "you" to be the censor of literature and were "you" to look into things, none of the Roman poets would be marked for expulsion from the aristocracy of letters. However, Gellius's habitual reading shows that this "you" would be mistaken.

The chapter is relatively unusual in its invocation of the second person. The *Noctes* regularly contains "I" as one of the characters of the drama even if this character is frequently in the background. Here, though, the "I" who reads addresses a "you" who also reads even though "you" may well be a misreader. Gellius continues to use the trope: "But if you were to bring together and if you were to set side by side . . ." At 2.23.3, then, we find *conferas, componas, and committas*.³² Gellius brings together a number of *con-* compounds concerning the topic of bringing together and comparing Greek and Latin texts. He also simultaneously compares "you" as a reader with "I" as a reader. Of course, the final product of this juxtaposition will be the eclipse of "you" as a reader in the name of the "I," for you will come to see things just as Gellius does once you sit next to him reading the texts he has set side by side. Your old judgments will be eclipsed as you perceive the way that the Greek originals outshine the derivative Latin copies. The move is striking inasmuch as Gellius is himself so gladdly unoriginal. But it

29. Compare and contrast Richards 1993:1–8.

30. See Jenson 1997 on Gellius as a literary critic. He examines *Noctes* 2.23 in detail as well.

31. *Comoedias lectitamus nostrorum poetarum sumptas ac uersas de Graecis Menandro aut Posidippo aut Apollodoro aut Alexide et quibusdam item aliis comicis* (2.23.1).

32. See Vardi 1996 on comparative criticism in Gellius and its relationship to the long history of *synkrisis* in antiquity. Vardi argues that Gellius in fact simultaneously employs two conflicting principles of judgment in this passage, one suited to creative rivalry and the other to faithful translation (1996:509). See also Jenson 1997:362 on the way in which theories of translation and of literary criticism have become entangled in this chapter.

does reveal the importance of being positioned to make an authoritative appeal to a prior authority.

Gellius's general remarks are then given their specific force: "Quite recently I had an experience of this very phenomenon" (*Nuper adeo usus huius rei nobis uenit*; 2.23.4). The phrase used here for an experience occurring is precisely the one employed in the preface and elsewhere for need arising: *usus uenit*. "We were reading Caecilius's *Plocium*." One is initially tempted to take *legebamus* as a plural with singular force. The preceding *lectitamus* should probably be so construed. It would be natural to do the same here. But it immediately becomes clear that "we" were reading: Gellius and his friends were gathered for a literary reading of Caecilius.³³ Everyone is happy with Caecilius. Then they get their hands on Menander (*in manus uenit*). They are being read to as a group, but the diction is appropriate to one man reading a book alone to himself. When the book arrives, the need arrives, and the experience happens: Caecilius suddenly seems terrible. "I"/"we" realized this. Soon "you" will have arrived at the same conclusion.

Gellius puts in our hands the passages from both poets. We have already, of course, been informed as to the appropriate reaction concerning what we are about to read: "When we will have read . . ." Gellius also makes our experience the inverse of his own. We are given the Greek first and then the Latin. After the juxtaposition Gellius makes clear what should have been immediately clear: Menander's clear writing (*praeclare scripsit*; 2.23.11), writes Gellius, wholly outshines Caecilius. The apt remarks of Menander's passage (*apposite scripsit*), aptly concludes Gellius as he sets the passages side by side in his own writing, are utterly lacking in the Latin version. The wit of Menander's original (*facete scripsit*), says Gellius without a noticeable trace of a grin, is lost in the copy. And in general, Gellius is happy to claim of Caecilius that all his divergences are the product of his inability to equal the original. The most sensitive Latin ear is willing to hate Latin itself if it might thereby enhance its own reputation for sensitivity.

V

Quid mihi discedens mandaritis meminisse; quid ego tibi scripserim te non arbitror oblitum.

"That I have written": how does this differ from "that I have read"? Gellius himself insists that we watch him reading; Gellius writes Gellius reading. Let us read, then.

33. "At the very heart of the use of literary texts was the association of the activity of reading with the elite community itself, and with the shared 'entertainments' that helped to bind and validate the group" (Johnson 2000:619).

We cannot just jump to the “raw” act of reading in Gellius. Reading is never a neutral and objective process. Reading is always also potentially writing. When he reads, Gellius excerpts. After Gellius excerpts, he annotates. Gellius uses *adnotare* to denote this habitual practice. Annotation represents a secondary revision of the raw material: What in what I have selected is worth pointing out to others? What is worth noting in my notes? Gellius already presupposes that you are likely to read him as he has read others: his lemmata allow a reader to jump directly to the chapters that appear most noteworthy. But this process presupposes a certain identity of interests and that we will let his questions be ours.

When a group is discussing a potential error in Cicero (1.7), a friend defends *futurum* with a variety of citations. Gellius first reports the argument at which he was present, and then he backs it up with an assertion that he too has lighted upon and annotated many other parallels (1.7.18). Annotation is thus a sort of preparation for an argument: “I just saw an odd use; I had better note it. This will come in handy later.” The friend was ready with a citation about the future in Cicero when the time came. Gellius assures us that he is/was too. We really ought to be jotting some of this down ourselves. We would be fools to be unprepared when the need arises (*usus uenit*).

Gellius notes that Probus noted various interesting uses in his own books. Gellius notes, then, that Probus noted that Aelius Teubero used the word *occecurrit*. Probus also noted that Valerius Antias used the word *sponderant*. Gellius sets down all over again the words of Antias that Probus set down: *Tiberius Gracchus qui . . .*³⁴ Gellius has read Probus’s reading notes. Gellius’s reading notes consist, in part, of noting others’ notes. And of course, the present text notes that Gellius has so noted. This kind of reading is expected of Gellius’s readers. To read is to plunder, to deracinate, to annotate. The aim of reading is rewriting, but there is no necessary fidelity on the part of the notes to the form of the text originally read. There is, though, a natural affinity when excerpting excerpters.

<Vb>

<*****>

Gellius offers a survey of ancient history and of prominent men of old in 17.21. The survey presents a double rewrite that offers a double overview of

34. *Aelium quoque Tiberonem libro ad C. Oppium scripto “occecurrit” dixisse Probus adnotauit et haec eius uerba apposuit: “Si generalis species occurrerit.” Valerium Antiatem*

Gellian authorship. Gellius is particularly interested in connecting Greek and Roman dates. Hundreds of years become a score of names and episodes. Though the chapter is one of the very longest in the *Noctes*, it is still remarkably brief for a history of several centuries. But that is because it is no history at all: it is merely a collection of little annotations (*adnotatiunculis*; 17.21.50). And Gellius has effectively lived up to his promise from the opening of the chapter: this will be an overview only, a *conspectum quendam* (17.21.1).

The assembled annotations that produce this overview serve a practical purpose. They prevent Gellius (and, by extension, us) from making the same blunder that someone else recently did when he had Carneades and Alexander as contemporaries. The dissertation by the speaker demonstrated nothing so much as his own want of education (*disserens*, ἀπαίδευτος; 17.21.1). Gellius shows that he is educated enough to have known in advance that such an overview was necessary: *excerpebamus . . . ut . . . habere-mus . . . ne . . .*³⁵ Gellius used to excerpt so as to have a *conspectus*, lest he make the blunder that the sophist made.

However, Gellius offers a second overview, an overview of his overview. He rewrites his rewrite of history. Though the opening sentence of the chapter is long, it is clear enough: “I used to excerpt in order to . . .” Gellius next, though, says that he has “now” hastily organized his excerpts taken from here and there (*easque nunc excerptiones nostras uariis diuersisque in locis factas cursim digessimus*). Gellius used to excerpt from books dedicated to questions of dating (*excerpebamus; chronici*). But “now” Gellius feels called upon to put them back together into some sort of order although his original intention was not a chronology. And for the purposes of the *Noctes*, he says, it will be sufficient to give a few names and dates from which others can be inferred (17.21.2). We have, then, a chapter of excerpts become annotations. These excerpts had one sense when they were made—“I do not want to make a blunder”—and another when they are rearranged. But the purpose of the rearranged version is not clearly distinct from the original purpose. Gellius cut them up hoping to avoid an error. He rearranges them to prevent the same sort of error. The whole chapter is in effect a *conspectus* that will allow us to avoid error.

libro historiarum XXII. “speponderant” scripsisse annotauit uerbaque eius haec posuit: “Tiberius Graccus, qui quaestor C. Mancino in Hispania fuerat, et ceteri, qui pacem speponderant” (6.9.11–12).

35. This is one of the longest and most grammatically complex openings in all of the *Noctes*. I have significantly reorganized the order of appearance of the actual words.

The doubling is at the moment only mild. Version 1 says that historians were originally excerpted in order to produce an overview. Version 2 says that excerpts were now arranged in a cursory manner. But the rift between these two versions widens in the next sentence as the explanation of his motives and methods continues. Gellius claims that his purpose when excerpting was not a chronology, but rather he sought to strew lightly some little flowers of history into his *Noctes*.³⁶ That is, there are two different “original intentions” to the excerpts. One can be found in the first line of the chapter, another at the end of the first section of the chapter. Let us combine them: Gellius wanted an overview so that he could dissertate learnedly about history even as he merely appeared to be sprinkling in a few little blossoms of history.

Gellius ultimately decides that the chronologies that he ripped up will be reassembled. The overview he made for himself will no longer remain scattered and implicit, but rather it will be consolidated and made explicit. Gellius rewrites Gellius reading. And as we read this rewrite, we also learn how to read the historical method of Gellius throughout the *Noctes*. The overview of history gives an overview of how Gellius reads and writes history. This rewritten history is, of course, not the sort of history that Gellius would usually choose to write. And yet for the purpose of making an object lesson of the vanished authority of the ill-educated sophist, Gellius has to multiply objectify his own purposes when handling historical material.

This atypical chapter accordingly renders obliquely the typical relationship to the past in Gellius: wholes are destined to become parts. And conversely, the parts can always come together again into a new/old whole.³⁷ The laws of attraction and repulsion that govern the movement of bodies of knowledge, though, do not inhere in the objects themselves. Instead, the aesthetics of knowledge and the performance of knowledge come to dominate the physics of erudition. The *Noctes* as a florilegium contains as one of its chapters/blossoms a discourse on the art of historical flower arrangement wherein there is arranged in a single noteworthy bouquet a synopsis of history as botany.

Gellius writing Gellius the writer returns in another of the longest chapters of the *Noctes*. We find in 17.2 a nondiscourse on Gellius’s nonmethod. Gellius makes a part of his collection a portrait of himself collecting. The introduction to the chapter gives a justification for the contents. The

36. *Neque enim id nobis negotium fuit, ut acri atque subtili cura excellentium in utraque gente hominum συγχρονισμούς componeremus, sed ut noctes istae quadamtenus his quoque historiae flosculis leuiter iniectis aspergerentur* (17.21.1).

37. Compare Jacob 2000:104 on dissolution and synthesis in Athenaeus.

contents are a long stream of citations from Quadrigarius with brief comments attached to them. Gellius shows how he presorts his snippets and arranges them in various piles. The chapter thus shows us the raw material from which the *Noctes* is woven even as its artlessness is artfully inserted into the text. This story of little annotations offers an overview only, a *con-spectum quendam*, of how Gellius works. But we need to have it to hand if we are to offer the semblance of an educated dissertation on the whole scope of Gellius's text and to appraise its relationship to its origins/originals.

Cum librum ueteris scriptoris legebamus, conabamur postea memoriae uegetandae gratia indipisci animo ac recensere, quae in eo libro scripta essent in utrasque existimationes laudis aut culpae adnotamentis digna, eratque hoc sane quam utile exercitium ad conciliandas nobis, ubi uenisset usus, uerborum sententiarumque elegantium recordationes. Velut haec uerba ex Q. Claudii primo annali, quae meminisse potui, notauimus, quem librum legimus biduo proximo superiore.

When I used to read a book by an ancient author, afterward in order to strengthen my memory, I would try to mentally compass and review what was written in the book and what should be highlighted as worthy of either praise or blame. This was definitely a useful exercise for cultivating my recollection of elegant words and phrases when the need should arise. For example, I noted these words that I was able to remember from the first book of Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius's *Annales*. I read the book during the two preceding days.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 17.2.1–2

Even if the contents of the chapter come across as miscellaneous readings, this preface reveals the underlying logic of accumulation and annotation. One reads in order to remember. One remembers in order to reuse. *Vbi uenisset usus* here recalls *quando usus uenisset* from the preface (pr. 2). The phrase occurs in only these two places in Gellius. This chapter is accordingly tied into the programmatic opening of the whole of the *Noctes*. It illustrates with details the process outlined there. Of course, we may have been reading the *Noctes* up to this point with the vague sense that the *Noctes* was already roughly in the shape of the notes that Gellius had been taking. But this chapter on the raw materials from which chapters are made reveals the extent to which the dramaturgy of the *Noctes* and the gathering of parallel issues under one heading are distinct from the more basic act of annotation. Moreover, the practice of annotation as an *usus* is specifically

calibrated to answer the needs of the philologist, the *usus* that arrives when one will be called upon to be seen knowing.

Annotation is itself a doubly useful exercise. It helps the memory by helping the memory. That is, Gellius does not immediately take notes on what he reads in order to be able to remember it later. Instead, he takes notes on his memory of what he read in order to be able to remember it later. Gellius reads; Gellius remembers; Gellius writes up his notes; and therefore Gellius can remember all over again later. The *utile exercitium* means Gellius will be ready *ubi uenisset usus*. And Gellius implicitly adds another layer to this process: he notes that he remembers because he noted things that he remembered. That is, the presentation of the method is itself part of that method. Moreover, it is something “worth noting” for Gellius’s readers, a memorable moment on how to read/write/remember.

The book that Gellius takes notes on is not, of course, as we say, “any old book,” even though he gives the impression that any old book might well be worthy of annotations. We know from our prior readings of the *Noctes* and the notes we have taken that Quadrigarius is a decided favorite of Gellius.³⁸ More to the point, though, the phrase used of the old book, *librum ueteris scriptoris*, appears only twice in the *Noctes*. The same phrase is used to describe the prize book at the dinner party filled with philology games in 18.2.3. And so if one reads and notes Quadrigarius properly, when the need arises—for example, a dinner invitation—one will be able to use one’s memories to win a prize: a book of Quadrigarius, perhaps.

It is worth examining a couple of the actual notes offered in 18.2 in order to appreciate the specific practices (*usus*) that correspond to the theory of practice that Gellius provides. Most of the glosses on Quadrigarius’s phrases are designed for a competitive and aestheticizing milieu. His first snippet contains the word *inlatebrant*, “they enshadow.” Gellius remarks, “*inlatebrant* seemed poetic, but it is not out of tune or harsh.”³⁹ A conflict lurks in the background: how can one justify the use of such a verb?

But one can score points on offense and not just playing defense. Another passage uses *frunisci*, “to have the pleasure of.” Gellius’s note to himself is in effect a plan of attack when the occasion should arise, an occasion he will, of course, euphemize as *usus*: “*Frunisci* is certainly rather rare in the age of Cicero and after that extremely uncommon. Inexperienced antiquarians doubt if it is even Latin. But *fruniscor* is not only Latin; it is even more pleasant and agreeable than *fruor*. And as *fatiscor* is derived from

38. See Marache 1952:233.

39. “*Inlatebrant*” *uerbum poeticum uisum est, sed non absurdum neque asperum* (17.2.3).

fateor, so is *fruniscor* from *fruor*.”⁴⁰ The notations Gellius is making are not neutral observations. Instead, they are the outlines of an imagined scholarly dispute. Gellius can imagine some scholarly poser disputing the pedigree of *frunisci*. Perhaps such a person could even be tricked into raising an objection. In either case Gellius will be ready: he has the history of its use outlined. We also see preparations for an argument over analogy. And there is also an aesthetic argument. The good ear just “knows” good Latin. We also learn later that the phrase *sole occaso* is pleasingly antique, “provided one has an ear that is not squalid and dull” (*si quis aurem habeat non sordidam nec proculcatam*; 17.2.10).

The set of evaluative terms used throughout the chapter is distinctly “censorious.” But even as the preface to the chapter evokes the idea of praise and blame, what we discover is that Quadrigarius is uniformly praised, and an imagined interlocutor is being groomed for blame. The chapter routinely presents arguments of the form, “Quadrigarius says X, and that is in fact a good thing to say.” Gellius conjures the specter of someone who will potentially complain about something in Quadrigarius, and then Gellius notes down the various arguments, precedents, and aesthetic verdicts that can be used to show who really deserves to have his Latin impeached.

A whole host of meanings can be evoked from Gellius’s choice of *re-censere* for his activity. It means “to recall,” of course. But it is also definitely a census we are conducting and one replete with “marks of the censor,” *notae censoriae*.⁴¹ Will a word be given a place in the senate of the Republic of Latin, or should it be cast out? Accordingly, the *adnotationes* resemble the marks that the censors bestow on citizens, the *notae* that both signify and perform civil degradation. We can leave aside the *proletaria uerba* and instead mark out the best and worst notables within even a *classicus adsiduusque scriptor*.⁴² But this is also a “secondary census,” a review all over again of the question of an old author and his place in a new world. But this after-the-fact census can be counted upon to stigmatize not a noble house fallen on hard times but rather a new pretender to prestige, the bad antiquarian and johnny-come-lately into the Latin aristocracy.

“That I have written.” It is clear that Gellius the reader and Gellius the writer are not radically distinct figures. His reading turns into notes more

40. “<Frunisci>” *rarius quidem fuit in aetate M. Tulli ac deinceps infra rarissimum, dubitatumque est ab inperitis antiquitatis, an Latinum foret. Non modo autem Latinum, sed iucundius amoeniusque etiam uerbum est “fruniscor” quam “fruor,” et ut “fatiscor” a “fateor,” ita “fruniscor” factum est a “fruor”* (17.2.5–6).

41. *Notae* are also the marks that a scholar makes in a text of a “critical edition” in antiquity. See Kaster 1995:246–47 and 261–63.

42. Recall and review again 19.8.15 and the worthiness of the discussion of it earlier.

or less automatically. The aims of reading entail the kinds of purposes that are ideally served by writing. And yet Gellius writes more than just notes. The *Noctes* may arise out of disparate annotations, but it can still be distinguished from them. In fact, the *Noctes* can be described as a set of noteworthy events related to Gellius's own notations. The *Noctes* offers, then, the original notes themselves in an elaborated form. It also offers a portrait of the notes being put to use. The critic imagined in the scribbled notes of 17.2 is written into other chapters of the *Noctes* as genuinely there. Throughout the whole of the text complaints about a word like *frunisci* are raised, and they are cuttingly answered.⁴³

Before I write up my notes on the way Gellius writes up practice, I would like to linger for a moment longer on this question of the way he writes up his reading. At 17.2 we see the raw material becomes the cooked material; the notes become the *Noctes*. It also shows that the original notes are not all that raw: they already look forward to the kinds of moments we see throughout the *Noctes*. "Write what you know." This is said to be sage advice to aspiring authors. Gellius has a double relationship to the maxim. First, he is obsessed with writing what he knows, that is, with transcribing the contents of his knowledge. Next, he constantly writes up his "life experience." He promises in the preface that while he lives he will keep writing up his commentaries (pr. 24), but these commentaries consist of a life of experiences with books. That is, "to read" is an experience worth writing about. It is what Gellius knows; it is what he does; it is what he cares about.

VI

Scito enim me, postea quam in urbem uenerim, redisse cum ueteribus amicis, id est cum libris nostris, in gratiam.

"That I had arrived." Although several chapters of the *Noctes* consist of "bare facts," Gellius is far more likely to give the story of the facts and to relate the "chain of custody" of the knowledge he conveys to us. Similarly, it is not at all unlikely that any given chapter will involve at least fleetingly "Gellius" as a character. Gellius the writer writes innumerable scenes wherein he is present at a party, at a conversation. Therefore, let us rewrite

43. They are seldom, though, answered by Gellius. If Gellius's notes on Quadrigarius conjure a fight in which Gellius himself will be taking sides, the *Noctes* generally writes of scenes where other parties are fighting. A typical scene portrays an authority figure like Favorinus defending an ancient book against a young reader.

the verb *uenerim* as “that I was present when . . .” Gellius was present when philology happened. The practice of erudition was enacted, and it is Gellius’s usual practice to record such activities. Need arose, *usus uenit*, and Gellius was there: *uenerim*.

Venerim is a verb form suited to a subordinate construction. And yet this very subordination comes to dominate and to organize the structure of the whole of the *Noctes*. By subordinate I mean to highlight the subjunctive aspect of Gellius’s relationship to reading, writing, and arriving. The activity is always “perfect,” it is complete and done, and it is also connected to the main action of the text via a distinct set of relationships: there is something “final,” concessive, or consecutive to this antecedent activity.⁴⁴ And this combination of subordination and predication gives rise to a number of indirect questions concerning the nature of the relationship between Gellius and the stories he relates in the *Noctes*.

Gellius was there when . . . Gellius encounters knowledge in a number of usual places and situations. He then writes up the scene for us to read. Gellius writes of scenes from his school days, of knowledge encountered in what is for us its expected place.⁴⁵ But an older Gellius has no trouble finding learning everywhere in the world around him. Gellius attends parties and goes to dinners.⁴⁶ He tags along with others as they visit friends.⁴⁷ He visits friends of his own; sometimes they are sick.⁴⁸ He travels to the countryside.⁴⁹ Gellius is there when others are reading a book.⁵⁰ Gellius watches as a man of learning exposes the ignorance of a pretender.⁵¹ Gellius goes to the baths and to the theater.⁵² Gellius waits to greet Caesar. Gellius strolls.⁵³ Gellius boards a ship and finds himself in the middle of a journey.⁵⁴ He will have arrived elsewhere in the end, but we see him always already up for some erudition. The following episode is thus emblematic of the life of the book: in 19.7 Gellius goes to a dinner, hears a reading, and afterward the

44. I am using “final” as a grammarian might: aiming at some end or purpose.

45. For example, 7.6.

46. We have already encountered a number of these scenes. But some examples are 2.22, 7.13, and 17.8. In 17.20 we see a reading of the *Symposium* of Plato at what may well be a symposium.

47. For example, 2.26.

48. For example, 17.10, 18.10, 19.7, 20.8, and 19.10.

49. For example, 19.5. Many of the house visits are to country homes as well.

50. For example, 18.9.

51. For example, 9.2, 18.4, and 19.10. This is a common and favorite type of scene.

52. For example, 18.13 and 18.5.

53. For example, 7.16, 14.5, and 18.1.

54. For example, 2.21, 12.5, 16.6, and 19.1.

whole party “ruminates upon” (*ruminabamur*) the interesting words in the book: that is, they digest the contents of the meal and the text in tandem.⁵⁵

The common habit of the text, then, is to paint a portrait of life itself as filled with habitual encounters wherein texts are discussed. But it is not just Gellius who writes of the bookishness of life. That is, it is not some peculiar vision of his own that insists on inserting texts throughout his text. This does not arise out of some hobby-horsical Uncle Tobyish predilection to see antiquarianism everywhere he turns. As was clear from the reading of 19.8 above, Fronto and his interlocutor were having a bookish discussion about a discussion in a book. And then Gellius wrote up that discussion. The dialogue setting of so many ancient works strongly encourages this sort of *mise en abyme* result. As soon as one book explicitly discusses another book, the dialogue in the one can produce a recursive regress in the dialogic imagination of the other as voices proliferate and echo back and forth.

Conversely, our own books pretend that the measure of their own veridicity is indexed to their detachment from all things of the world. A book tells the truth of the world by withdrawing from it. To the extent that other books are invoked, they too are detached and objective objects. A scholar’s professional life—a thing regularly and strongly distinguished from his or her personal life—may subsist on a steady diet of conferences, talks, and exchanges of letters, but indications of these only rarely appear in the books that arise out of such exchanges. A single and polite note at the opening or close of an article will quickly gesture toward the author’s friends and simultaneously dismiss them.

It comes as a shock, then, to suddenly realize that Donna Haraway has a body even though one knows that “of course she does.” In fact, it is important to have it appear not just in life, but in books as well. Judith Butler’s *Bodies That Matter* conjures Haraway’s body as it both conjures and dispels Butler’s own. Toward the end of the titular chapter, Butler writes, “The body that is reason dematerializes the bodies that may not properly stand for reason or its replicas, and yet this is a figure in crisis, for this body of reason is itself the phantasmatic dematerialization of masculinity, one which requires that women and slaves, children and animals be the body, perform the bodily functions, that it will not perform.”⁵⁶ And then one reads the following footnote to this passage: “Donna Haraway, responding to an earlier draft of this paper in a hot tub in Santa Cruz, suggested that . . .”

55. See again Henry 1994:1926 on the alimentary metaphors in Gellius.

56. Butler 1993:49.

Two female bodies, one almost seen, the other easily inferred, float before us warm, happy, and at ease. Two women are discussing reason's quasi body. This is a scene of knowing, but in this book about bodies, it disrupts the very convention of abstract, textual, and masterful knowing that is being discussed in the main text. The phantasmatic materialization of femininity rewrites reason. It matters that the body be here materialized, just as it matters that the lesbian phallus "will have arrived" (or not) in Butler's next chapter.

The challenge Gellius presents to his reader is to embrace this descent into the swirling maelstrom of texts as if it were a good soak in an Athenian hot tub. Or to shift the metaphor to a Derridean register, Gellius offers a constant enticement to contract a case of archive fever. Losing oneself in the library stacks is also a way of finding oneself, of materializing as a self. If the pleasures of knowing and the prospect of joining the in-crowd of knowers are not carrot enough to get us excited, Gellius also brandishes the stick: those who do not make their life books and books their life can expect to be humiliated by those who do. He offers a phantasmatic materialization of an eternal community of male knowers forever reading, writing, and discussing. The fantasy of imperial mastery and absolute freedom to innovate is scrupulously withheld, though. This is a community of subjected male subjects, of men who belong to a Restored Republic of Letters and who themselves work diligently to safeguard this unbodied politic.⁵⁷

Revolutionary postmodernism is not the name of the antiquarian game. Much as Augustus's restored republic is better known as the imperial age, so too are these imperial archivists committed to a version of hierarchy and authority that safeguards their own privileged position precisely at the cost of subtracting and relegating to the past the perpetual dictatorship of Caesar the philologist. That authority is still felt as lived, but one can only cite it, not be it. Revolution, *res nouae*, will be scrupulously erased. One has arrived in a state where Caesar had arrived in advance and where another Caesar eventually will have come.

<VIb>

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I wish to conclude, then, my discussion of the places and placement of Gellius with an examination of philology as a process that is always in

57. Or is it the "Republic Preserved"? See Judge 1974 on *res publica restituta* as a modern invention that supplants *res publica conseruata*. Fortunately, *conseruata* works just as well—if not better—for my point.

progress. The scenes that take place in the middle of journeys are emblematic of the dynamics of nonarrival within the context of the many conclusions “reached” by the various players in the *Noctes*.

Gellius and friends are sailing from Aegina to the Piraeus (2.21). They look up at the stars and begin to dream of books. They discuss the origin of the name *septentriones* for a certain constellation. The common rabble of grammarians (*uulgius grammaticorum*; 2.21.6), says one fellow traveler on the seas of knowledge, thinks that the name refers to the number of stars. They declare that the *septem* is the only thing that means anything in the word and that *triones* has no value.⁵⁸ That is, the sign *triones* is insignificant, even though *signa* is itself a synonym for a constellation of stars. “But for my part I cast my vote with Aelius and Varro,”⁵⁹ the man continues. The old antiquarians say that *triones* signifies not nothing, but rather it means oxen. Therefore, the Latin name for the constellation is in fact related to the Greek one: ἄμαξα. And then, adds the unnamed antiquarian, Varro added to his antiquarian account a second explanation. Varro wondered if *triones* was not a reference to triangles. The constellation can be seen as a set of triangles (2.21.10).

For an antiquarian there cannot be too many answers to a question.⁶⁰ Recording multiple right answers only means augmenting one’s own rightness as an authoritative author. Varro has not arrived at a singular conclusion. As they sail along, the company of his readers is happy to seize upon the open nature of the question. The authoritative Varro leaves them space to keep on moving over the surface of the question. Certainly, they do not plunge into its depths, and Gellius is always warning us against the pedantry of discourse that gets too deep.

In any case, the chapter closes with a remark that an aesthetic verdict was cast. Of the two explanations, the latter one, the one about triangles, “seemed more subtle and elegant.”⁶¹ And in a gesture virtually unparalleled in the *Noctes*, they all look up at the sky and draw an inference based on their own observation, their own reading of the *signa* of the stars: the constellation really does look like a collection of triangles. But this moment

58. See Baratin 1999 on the phenomenon of “null value” in Latin grammarians. Vaahtera 1998:155 also comments briefly on the phenomenon in this passage.

59. *sed ego quidem cum L. Aelio et M. Varrone sentio* (2.21.8).

60. Compare Feeney 1998:128 on exegesis in Roman religion: “[T]he competition of interpretations is endemic to the system.” And Law notes that medieval hermeneutics also accepted multiple possible explanations (1995:4, 26, and 107).

61. *Ex his duabus rationibus, quas ille dixit, quod posterius est, subtilius elegantiusque est uisum* (2.21.11).

of autopsy and surrender to the manifest should not blind us to the fact that “elegance” is what one prizes in an explanation, not “truth.” Beauty is truth. Only after one privileges this first proposition can we add as well that truth is beauty. Of course, there is something beautiful about authority and about antiquity. And so we often see an aesthetics of power and precedent that can generate attributions of truth.

Even when traveling alone, Gellius fancies himself in the good company of scholars. In fact, truly solitary solitude is potentially perilous. One does better to conjure scenes of the stormy seas of learning than to sit a prey to fancy. The constant conjuring of slings and arrows of outrageous erudition allows a mind to resist being besieged and overcome by a far more dire foe, an ever-waiting folly:

Telorum iaculorum gladiatorumque uocabula, quae in historiis ueteribus scripta sunt, item nauigiorum genera et nomina libitum forte nobis est sedentibus in reda conquirere, ne quid aliarum ineptiarum uacantem stupentemque animum occuparet. Quae tum igitur suppetierant, haec sunt: . . .

As I was riding along in a carriage I happened to desire to recall the names for the weapons, missiles, and swords that one can find in old historians and also the types of ships and their names lest instead some other absurd thoughts seize my mind while it was torpid and unoccupied. And so these are the things that came to mind at that time: . . .

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 10.25

Another day in the life of Gellius, it would seem. But here we see neither the social practice of philology nor rehearsals for that practice. Instead, Gellius depicts a compulsive scholarship. Left to its own devices, the brain will wander down the wrong path as the body rolls down the road in a traveling carriage. This problem casts the phrase *libitum forte*, “it chanced to please,” into an interesting light. Gellius is constantly describing the actions of his chapters as fortuitous, and given the stagy quality of so many of them, the word’s veracity is readily doubted. And here too it is easy to see Gellius as taking us on a very pointed and purposeful journey and thus as motivated to fake things at least a bit. However, the aleatory quality of the pleasure in this particular case is counterposed to a chance mental wantonness that threatens to appear on the scene. The chance pleasure of research casts out the chance arrival of daydreams of other and divergent pleasures.

The phrase “I chanced to desire to recall” is a bit off, then. “By chance it was a pleasure to me to research” renders the core of the sentence more literally. *Conquirere* is “to recall” only in the sense that Gellius is clearly not in a library and pointedly does not have access to books, friends, and the other trappings of his usual practices. That is, he cannot “seek out” or “inquire into” the questions he sets himself by any means other than by digging into the archive that is his own memory. Much as the reading of Quadrigarius was converted into notes so as to be converted into memories and, ultimately, so as to be converted into a chapter of the *Noctes*, here we see a related movement. The readings that were noted became memories that can be returned to as if they were a library. And Gellius can annotate for us the things that he found in this archive.

Either one gets lost in the memory books and the library that has been crammed into one’s head, or disaster ensues. The last word of the sentence is linked to the first: *occuparet* is a good verb to employ in a sentence that opens with *telorum*. The violent seizure of control of a city by means of weapons, both missiles and swords, and with the assistance of naval power is the sort of thing that fills the old histories. This old book, the *Noctes*, is filled with arms and ships so as to repulse an attack on the citadel of reason by the forces of folly that forever clamor before the gates. Gellius sings a song of himself, sings of arms and a man: “On that day, in that cart, I prevailed.” Don Quixote is transcribing the life of Sancho Panza.⁶²

The mind is a citadel to be defended, but it is also potentially, if not actually, decadent and soft. Unoccupied, it is about to be occupied: the vacuum will be filled, seized even. Bewildered, it is about to be overrun. Gellius divides himself from himself in order to wheel around and seize control of his mind before it loses control and falls prey to the wrong sort of thoughts. Thoughts of arms whip the mind into military shape, and Gellius the Bookish reigns as *dictator perpetuus* over his own *animus*. This self-mastery in the cart yields a triumphal parade of (re)captured arms. The remainder of the chapter arrays the spoils before our eyes, and it is easy enough to (re)imagine Gellius in a chariot driving through the *porta triumphalis* rather than in a traveling carriage heading nowhere in particular.⁶³ Gellius the reader of *Annals* becomes his own annalist.

62. See Fronto’s romantic portrait of the composition of Caesar’s *De analogia* amid the tumult of the Gallic wars: *inter tela uolantia de nominibus declinandis, de uerborum aspirationibus et rationibus inter classica et tubas* (Fronto, *De bello Parthico* 9). All one need do is swap the words for the things, and we have a Caesar who is Gellius: *inter nomina declinanda de telis uolantibus* . . .

63. Compare the brief overview of what a proper triumph looks like in Nicolet 1988:353.

VII

Quid sit scientem agere.

As a practice, then, antiquarianism concerns itself with symbols of violence as well as symbolic violence. It is aggressive and competitive, and its arms are, among other things, the signifiers that designate arms. The process entails the mastery of others as well as the mastery of the self. Preliminary to either conquest, though, one masters the contents of books. This first success empowers the scholar to challenge all competitors.

If we recall the meanings of *usus*, the constellation of meanings can be seen to take on a distinctly triangular shape when gazed at from the deck of a ship. The use or enjoyment of a book verges into ownership rights. A book also meets needs and prospective uses. Owning knowledge is not an absolute unto itself; it subsists in a dynamic interplay with the employment of knowledge where knowledge is used to demonstrate one's own entitlement and/or the illegitimacy of another. The way one does things as a scholar, the usual practices of the learned, can be understood as a series of sometimes violent property disputes concerning knowledge.

Gellius constantly stages for us the scholar as a performer of knowledge. These are plays about men playing the game of knowledge. My ambiguous and duplicitous wordplay with these two senses of play only reflects the difficult and dramatic game that is afoot in the *Noctes*. In the *Noctes* some players are good, others utterly unconvincing. The method actors, of course, are the best. Gellius the author is not afraid to insert into his shows a character named Gellius who plays either a leading or, as is often the case when someone like Fronto takes center stage, a secondary role in the drama. And other than Gellius himself, virtually every *adulescens* that appears in the *Noctes* arrives precisely so as to be put in his place by an older and more educated player. They are foils. They are losers.

A youthful Gellius asks a certain famous *grammaticus* about an obscure phrase with legal overtones. The *grammaticus* snidely refuses to answer: "Ask me a question about poetry, not about law." Gellius says, "But this is in Ennius." (20.10). One suspects that the question was not all that innocent: exposing the limitations of grammatical knowledge is the point of the chapter as a whole and of numerous other scenes. The deceptive question, the question that asks more than it seems, the question that is in fact a challenge recurs throughout the *Noctes*. Such questions are more like an opening move in a game of chess, a pawn pushed forward with an eye to the response of the other player.

The ancient circles of the learned work like the clusters of young and old

who play chess in the park today. One should be wary of the innocent-looking young man and cautious when sitting down before the shabby old coot. Not only can anyone turn out to be a shark, but in fact almost everyone present can be expected to at least entertain such aspirations. Someone is showing off in the circles; Favorinus shuts him down (4.1). Gellius recites some verses in the circles; someone haughtily declares that they contain a solecism. Gellius shuts him down (15.9). Ennius is being read in a circle of men. Gellius asks a jurist about one of the lines. The jurist says, "Ask me a question about law, not about poetry." Gellius says, "But this is in the Twelve Tables" (16.10).

The pattern is simple enough throughout the *Noctes*. At a gathering someone is challenged; a response is given; the challenger then responds, "But . . ." Sometimes the person challenged has invited the engagement; on other occasions the assault comes unbidden. However, it is utterly naive to show up in the middle of the field of play without expecting that the game might come your way. Play, or go home. These circles of men and their circulating questions indicate that the motif of "arriving" is only but one moment on a circuitous course. One is forever moving forward, but only around the same racecourse. Each set of questions and answers is but another lap.

Let us take another turn, then. In 16.6 Gellius returns from Greece to Italy. His Attic nights have ended; Italic ones are on their way. His ship puts in at Brundisium. Gellius has not yet reached where he was headed, but he has nevertheless arrived just where he wanted to be, namely, at a bookish showdown. A certain headmaster of the Latin tongue had been summoned there from Rome. He was offering himself to any and all who would make a test of him.⁶⁴ We know how this is going to end even before it begins: these small-time chumps always get blasted. But the key thing is that the man was begging for it. He was establishing his standing by taking questions publicly and proving his worthiness by, one assumes, showing how much more he knew than did his questioners. The *litterator* had been summoned; he had arrived; he offered himself to the public: test me. The common crowd, though, is naturally unqualified to set a proper exam.

The man was offering an ignorant and barbarous reading of the seventh book of Vergil. He was taking questions. Gellius is surprised that the fool is so ready to rush into a place where only a devil such as himself would dare to tread. But Gellius is happy to oblige him. So Gellius asks about *bidentes*:

64. *Redeuntes Graecia Brundisium nauem aduertimus. Ibi quispiam linguae Latinae litterator Roma a Brundisinis accersitus experiundum sese uulgo dabat* (16.6.1).

why are sheep called this? (16.6.5). The question is more literally, “Why are *bidentes* called *bidentes*?” The query elicits a nonanswer: “Sheep are called *bidentes*.” This is a gloss, not an explanation, a what and not a why. Gellius replies that they can look into whether only sheep are called *bidentes* in a minute. He asks again for a why, for the *ratio huiusce uocabuli* (16.6.8).

“And he did not hesitate for a second but said as boldly as can be, ‘They are called *bidentes* because they have only two teeth.’”⁶⁵ The scene is rendered as a staccato dialogue. The narrative voice constantly inserts editorial comments between the exchanges. We are meant to smile along with Gellius the grin of a wolf about to pounce on the neck of a lamb. Gellius marvels at the answer: what a frightful portent, sheep with only two teeth! The *litterator* finally realizes that something has gone wrong. He protests, “Ask me a question about grammar, not about animal husbandry.”⁶⁶

Gellius laughs at the witticisms of this impostor, turns, and walks away: *facetias nebulonis hominis risi et reliqui* (16.6.12). The show is over. The man was good for a laugh, but the joke is on him. Gellius restages his buffoonery for your pleasure, a bit of fun as we take a break in the course of our more serious journey. The man and his learning are as insubstantial as a cloud. *Nebulo* is a common epithet of utter dismissal in the *Noctes*.

The chapter, though, does not end: we have not reached our destination; we are only halfway from Athens to Rome and but halfway through our anecdote. Gellius the tired sailor steps away from the incompetent teacher. We can also imagine that the *litterator* has exited stage right as directed in the script. Meanwhile, Gellius steps out of the character of traveler and into that of authoritative reader. He comes center stage and performs for us the remainder of the scene that he had begun with the teacher. We are now an audience to a one-man show rather than a two-man skit. Or maybe we are the second character in a different kind of show. We are conjured as phantasmatic interlocutors, as men of Gellius’s circle with whom such things can be seriously discussed. Gellius the character-cum-narrator-cum-author proceeds to tick off the relevant pieces of information. Nigidius covers a portion of this question in his *On Entrails*—the very title makes one feel warm inside: what delicious obscurity. But Gellius has also seen some *commentarii* on pontifical law that complicate the matter. Julius Hyginus, a man who knows about things pontifical, in his commentary on Vergil effectively gives the same explanation as does Nigidius. Gellius

65. *Atque ille nihil cunctatus, sed nimium quantum audacter “oues” inquit “bidentes” dictae, quod duos tantum dentes habeant*” (16.6.9).

66. *Tum ille permotus mihi et inritatus “quaere” inquit “ea potius, quae ex grammatico quaerenda sunt; nam de ouium dentibus opiliones percontantur”* (16.6.11).

quotes from it. Gellius says that Hyginus's explanation can be readily verified with one's own eyes.

Using one's eyes, though, is by no means the recommended practice in Gellius. Eyes are generally used for reading. And the head for storing things read. Autopsy and abstract reasoning are deprecated. These modes of knowing are useful only after one has first read up on a topic, not in advance of the initial bibliographic research. The *litterator* did not use his own bibliophile eyes; he instead used the false reasoning entailed by appealing directly to the etymology of *bidentes*: *Bi-* means two; *dentes* are teeth. Therefore, *bidentes* means two-teeth. The *litterator* and men like him cannot reason deeply, and they cannot see into the depths of things because they have not read deeply and researched thoroughly. They have eyes, but they cannot see. They have hearts, but they remain torpid and unoccupied. Only sailors on the sea of knowledge are qualified to guide themselves by looking up at the constellations. When they look up, they see either a wagon or some triangles. They do not see a chaos of stars. They know the history of the question before they set themselves to the elegant art of deciding upon it.⁶⁷

A *litterator* at best knows the what, but he cannot give the why. He can gloss, but there is no depth to his story. The drama of his knowledge is thus two-dimensional. Of course, Gellius's own dramaturgy relies on a constant supply of just such nameless and flat stock characters. Gellius uses their lack of substance as a comic prologue to his more serious play wherein he establishes the depth of character of the erudite protagonist in these stagy and playful chapters. Depth of character in this case, though, overlaps with depth of reading. As player on the stage and player of the game of knowledge that is thereupon staged, the well-read character is always convincing and always victorious.

Gellius the sailor has a bit of fun. He is able to do so because Gellius the carriage passenger refused himself a certain kind of fun. The self-cruelty of the one event ensures success when later the punishing game of learning must be played in earnest. The *litterator* challenged one and all to a game of knowledge. He stood to profit in a real sense from it: "Look how clever the new professor in town is! I had better send my son off to his school

67. C'est à rendre fou dit Bouvard. Il déplora son ignorance et même regrettait de n'avoir pas été, dans sa jeunesse, à l'École Polytechnique.

Alors Pécuchet le tournant vers la Grande Ourse, lui montra l'étoile polaire, puis Cassiopée dont la constellation forme un Y, Véga de la Lyre toute scintillante, et au bas de l'horizon, le rouge Aldebaran.

Bouvard, la tête renversée, suivait péniblement les triangles, quadrilatères et pentagones qu'il faut imaginer pour se reconnaître dans le ciel.

right away.” But no matter how self-impressed such men may be, they are nothing but a joke to the truly serious players in the world of erudition.

VIII

Postrema quaestionum omnium haec fuit: “scripserim,” “legerim,” “uenerim” cuius temporis uerba sint, praeteriti an futuri an utriusque.

The final question is what is the tense of *scripserim*, *legerim*, and *uenerim*? Are they past or future, or both? One would have to look at the use of these words in order to offer an answer. One would need to see them in context. The uses of reading, writing, and arriving within the context of antiquarian life, though, reveal that these activities bear a complex relationship to the main clauses and causes in which they find themselves implicated. The temporal and logical relationships of the subordinate action to the main clause remains evocatively ambiguous.

Past, present, and future weave elaborate figures between and among one another. Antiquarianism straddles all three times at all times.⁶⁸ It also simultaneously engages all three at multiple levels of its own narrative. Thus, for example, one records now and for the future past discussions of Sallustian transgressions. The example is worth exploring in detail, though: it exposes the hypnotic synchrony of antiquarianism. The knowledge thereby produced may be ephemeral, but the practices of knowing themselves make a bid for timelessness.

Asinio Pollioni in quadam epistula, quam ad Plancum scripsit, et quibusdam aliis C. Sallusti iniquis dignum nota uisum est, quod in primo historiarum maris transitum transmissumque nauibus factum “transgressum” appellauit eosque, qui fretum transmiserant, quos “transfretasse” dici solitum est, “transgressos” dixit.

Asinius Pollio in a certain letter to Plancus and to certain other enemies of Sallust thought that Sallust deserved a black mark because in the first book of his *Histories* he called crossing the sea and the transit made by means of ships a *transgressus*. And those who had crossed the *fretum*, men of whom one usually uses the verb *transfretasse*, he called *transgressos*.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 10.26.1

68. “When I have spoken of the past, it will be easy to pass on to a word about the present and about the future,” the self-archiving Lloyd-Jones says that he said in his inaugural lecture titled “Greek Studies in Modern Oxford” (Lloyd-Jones 1982:13).

How the army got there is more than half the fun for the antiquarians. Various conclusions have been reached concerning how Sallust says an army reached its destination. Gellius writes a *commentarius* about a letter of Pollio. The attack on the army of Sallust launched by Pollio and a faceless host of foes will be countered by Gellius as he sails over the sea of ages in order to address the issue of transmission and whether *transgressum* is a transgression. The censorious mark (*nota*) of Pollio has been excerpted and annotated by Gellius. And in the end the mark of opprobrium will be shifted from Sallust to his critics.

Gellius cites the words of Sallust himself. Then Gellius cites the verdict made against them: they are improper (*minus proprie*), thoughtless (*ἀπερισκέπτως*), and lacking authoritative precedent (*nullo graui auctore*; 10.26.4). Gellius continues with a quote and a summary of the ensuing arguments from Pollio's letter. The core issue is *gressus*. It is properly of movement on foot. "But, I ask," asks Gellius, "why, on the analogy of 'running' (*cursus*), can't *transgressus* also be used of ships?"

The point that interests us is the grammar of the frame: *sed quaero ego*. *Quaerere* is extremely common in the *Noctes*. The verb can readily be used of abstract inquiry, but is frequently employed in the context of a concrete question-and-answer session. A book is being read; an unusual word crops up; questions are raised.⁶⁹ At a dinner party people inquire of one another.⁷⁰ And one may investigate things in old books. In the discussion of the meaning of *penus*, the overconfident grammarian begins his bad answer, "Your question is really very simple." (*Quaeris*) *inquit* "*rem minime obscuram*"; 4.1.7).⁷¹ The grammarian asked by Gellius about *manum consertum* at first thinks that Gellius has violated the rules of the game of question and answer.⁷²

Quaerere also has its bookish side. Gellius was trying to learn more about *infestum*, and he found a passage in Nigidius that helped him out.⁷³ Gellius also effectively researches in the library of his own recollection of books.⁷⁴ The impersonal "one frequently asks," *quaeri solet*, consistently

69. *Tum ibi quaeri coeptum est, quid esset proletarius* (16.10.2).

70. The rules of the game at the book party were that the number of questions would match the number of guests: *totidemque res quaerebat, quot homines istic eramus* (18.2.3).

71. Compare 6.17.2: *Atque ille aspexit me inludens leuitatem quaestionis prauitatemque: "Obscuram" inquit "sane rem quaeris multaque prorsus uigilia indagandam."*

72. *Rem enim doceo grammaticam, non ius respondeo; si quid igitur ex Vergilio, Plauto, Ennio quaerere habes, quaeras licet* (20.10.2).

73. *Nos igitur de origine et ratione uerbi quaerebamus atque ita in Nigidianis scriptum inuenimus* (9.12.6).

74. *Quando ab arbitriis negotiisque otium est et motandi corporis gratia aut spatiamur*

evokes both the researches and the discussions of the learned in Gellius: there are certain standing scholarly issues to which Gellius and his ilk keep returning. Whether one seeks and finds in the company of others or in a library is an open question.⁷⁵

The point of this inquiry into the use of the verb “to inquire” and the habitual uses with which it is associated, though, is to inquire as to what sort of inquiry Gellius is making in the here and now of the *Noctes*. Is he, then, conjuring the long-dead Pollio to ask him about a question of philology as if they were at a party and not in a library? “Tell me, Pollio, . . .” Can, then, a textual here and now be confused with a literal here and now, present-in-a-book with present-at-hand? In such a circumstance not only would one never have to worry about “the death of the author,” but, in fact, no author could ever die, nor could he ever be absent provided his book is to hand.

Gellius retorts with a challenge to those who would doubt the authority of Sallust’s use of *transgressus*. That is, Gellius challenges Pollio. Insufficient *auctoritas* is one of the three complaints leveled against the word by Pollio and the nameless enemies of Sallust. “But those who demand an authoritative precedent (*auctoritatem*) and who deny that *ingredi* or *transgredi* is used in the case of ships, well, I want them to give me an answer: how great do they think the difference is between *ingredi* and *ambulare*?”⁷⁶ The challenge and its diction recall the sort of fighting that happens in the face-to-face scenes discussed above. But there is nobody here to give Gellius his answer. He is sparring with the phantom of Pollio rather than Pollio himself. Gellius next whips out a passage of Cato. He brandishes some Lucretius. “Here are your authorities, Pollio.”

In writing up his reading Gellius arrives in an imaginary textual space where he and Pollio can exchange words and blows about the words of Sallust. Pollio may have complained about an impossible and ridiculous crossing, *transgredi* for *transfretasse*, but in order to answer this objection Gellius himself strides over the span of ages to join battle with Pollio and his army. The *commentarius* thus writes back to Pollio’s epistle. And much as the *Noctes* contains an exchange of letters about an exchange of letters

aut uectamur, quaerere nonnumquam apud memet ipsum soleo res eiusmodi paruas quidem minutasque et hominibus non bene eruditis aspernabiles. (11.3.1).

75. See 13.20: Gellius et al. are sitting in a library inquiring of books/inquiring of one another simultaneously.

76. *Qui auctoritatem autem requirunt et negant dictum “ingredi” “transgredi”ue in nauigantibus, uolo uti respondeant, quantum existiment interesse “ingredi” atque “ambulare”* (10.26.6).

about the word thrice (10.1), here too we see a temporal recursion that produces a synchrony of philology. And this from a man who said he was not interested in writing συγχρονισμούς (17.21.1). Historical figures and the highlights of past events may offer a few blossoms to be strewn throughout the *Noctes*, but the community of erudition's gardeners stands apart from time.

Gellius's time is not our time: the appellation "synchrony" as applied to this situation should perhaps be modified. A different appraisal might balk at his perfect subjunctives and his impossible dialogues and declare that "the time is out of joint." In the wake of this verdict we would meditate upon the anachrony opened up by the textual operations of antiquarianism.⁷⁷ But if we ourselves embrace the curse of setting the time to right, then we set upon ourselves a yoke of destiny in the same gesture as we accept and modify the antiquarian legacy: we destine ourselves to set in their proper order the improper times in Gellius, to put Gellius himself in the context of "his" time, to articulate the disparate body of his text and its discordant times into a unity, a unity only possible from a sense of the proper relation to "history." The *disparilitas* of Gellius vanishes. Seeking the truth of Gellius, we are willing to dispense with Gellius's sense of the truth of his text and practice.

We need to ask ourselves what it means to dispel the specter of Gellian disjointed time in the name of our own anachronistic insistence on chronology, in the name, then, of our destiny as historicizing commentators. Will we be faithful to our sense of time or to Gellius's lack thereof? For the historicist, everything must be put (back) into context.⁷⁸ All becomes clear when seen "in context." Nevertheless, "context" in this context has been stripped of its associations with textuality. "Context" is instead the aggregation of social, economic, and historical predicates that explain (away) any given text.

Conversely, in Gellius almost every quote is taken out of context and set into a new context, namely, the anachronistic synchrony of philological time.⁷⁹ We command ourselves to read Gellius, but not as Gellius. Is this not to misread the misreader? Will, then, a historicist reading of antiquarianism

77. Compare, then, Derrida 1994. See Porter 2000:6–7 on the untimeliness of Nietzsche's philology. See Hinds 1997:52–98 on the paradoxical chronology of the Latin literary tradition as a whole, especially in its relationship to Greek literature.

78. Compare the warnings about the dangers of "context" versus text at Feeney 1998:141.

79. Gellius proves to be unexpectedly faithful to Martindale's rallying cry: "We have to learn to respect not only the presentness of the present but also its pastness, and not only the pastness of the past but also its presentness" (Martindale 1993:7).

inevitably misappropriate its object even as it lays hold of it? Moreover, will this errancy reproduce in inverted form the antiquarian abuse of history? In both cases it is a question of *die Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben/Lesen*.

The use of usage, the practice of antiquarian practicalities, the appropriation of precedent, the profits accrued from other's property: such are the themes encountered by one who inquires into the text of the *Noctes*. However, one of the key features of "the practice of antiquarianism" is a consistent blurring of the boundary between book and life, theory and practice, commentary and original.⁸⁰ A commentary on a commentary makes for an interesting book. A discussion of a discussion excites. Everyone is always at the table/in the table of contents of the antiquarian book-party. We are there too, late but welcome and expected guests at a party where there will be a screening of *El Ángel exterminador*.⁸¹

80. See Whitmarsh 2001:120 on Favorinus: "*paideia* makes life into as much of an art form as literature." Education for an antiquarian, especially one who so admired Favorinus, has similar consequences even if they are more specifically "bookish."

81. Compare Davidson 2000:299 on the claustrophobia of Athenaeus's banquet.

LIBER QVARTVS



Index Nominum uel Dramatis Personae

I

Aesopus autem et Roscius famosissimi comoediarum <actores> fuerunt. Ac per hoc [Horatius] ostendit stultos homines, qui non merito ac uirtute <st>i<l>i, sed tantum modo personarum auctoritate mo<u>eantur.

My lemma is taken from Porphyrio's commentary on Horace's *Epistles*.¹ I have chosen a commentary on dramatic characters to open my commentary on characterization in Gellius. Porphyrio is explaining a passage from Horace. Horace, though, is writing a letter to Caesar. The letter is about literature and literary value: everything the busy chief civil authority needs to know in 270 verses. Horace compares Greeks and Romans. Horace builds a canon: Ennius, Plautus, and the rest are all here. Horace also, though, carves out a space for new literature and contemporary greatness. Horace asks as well whether one might today speak critically of past literature: "Shame is dead, scream nearly all the aristocrats (*patres*), since I attempt to chastise those roles that stately Aesopus, that learned Roscius performed."² These Saturnian fathers are willing to devour their sons and to prevent the new from ever growing into rivals.

iam Saliare Numae carmen qui laudat et illud,
quod mecum ignorat, solus uolt scire uideri,

1. Those for whom the much-supplemented <st>i<l>i is a cause of anxiety will be reassured by the following lemma: *INGENIIS NON ILLE. Hoc sensu uult ostendere huius modi homines, qui non merit<o> ac uirtute stili, sed tantum modo personarum auctoritate mortuis faueant, [s]e<t>, quod est peius, inuidos, qui <ui>uos contra meritum oderint* (2.1.lemma 85).

2. *recte necne crocum floresque perambulet Attae | fabula si dubitem, clament periisse pudorem | cuncti paene patres, ea cum reprehendere coner, | quae grauis Aesopus, quae doctus Roscius egit* (Horace, *Epistulae* 2.1.79–82).

ingeniis non ille fauet plauditque sepultis,
nostra sed inpugnat, nos nostraque liuidus odit.

The man who praises the Salian poem of Numa and alone
wants to seem to know that which he knows no better than me,
he favors not genius, his applause is for the dead and buried,
he assails my works, out of spite he detests me and my art.

—HORACE, *Epistulae* 2.1.86–89

The *patres* with their antiquarian tastes praise Numa's Salian hymn without understanding it. The past becomes its own inscrutable authority. The present lives a stunted life in its shadow. Horace begs to differ. This is not, he says, literary criticism; it is mere ill-will.

Porphyrion's text presupposes that Horace is an authority. It also assumes that Horace may well be inscrutable. Horace's allusions have become as opaque as the Salian verses. Porphyrio offers his readers a knowledge that can no longer be taken for granted. But he does not just tell us who Aesopus and Roscius were; Porphyrio shows us what Horace meant to show us by evoking them, namely, that stupid people are fooled by showy authority. The masks of power deceive, says Horace says Porphyrio.

But why am I going on about Horace? Why, indeed: Gellius mentions him but once and then only for a choice obscurity pertinent to the question at hand.³ Even if Horace formulates what for us are canonical rules and attitudes of "classical" aesthetics, the archaizers of the Antonine age have little or no time for him. Fronto calls him "memorable," but Fronto then makes it clear that Horace is chiefly memorable in his case because of Maecenas's gardens: Fronto is their current owner.⁴ The authoritative scholarly persona eschews performances of Horatian authority. Horace is either omitted entirely, or, when he does reappear, his name is not associated with a vindication of the possibilities for contemporary genius. Instead, Horatian authority lies dormant until someone like Porphyrio declares him to be authoritatively obscure, that is, useful according to the logic of antiquarianism. But then "the authority of ancient Horace" displaces the contents of Horace's own critique of the authority of the past. And yet the arrogation of power for the contemporary world written into Horace's poem has been retained even as it is inverted: it is now the self-authoring power of contemporary erudition.

3. Favorinus cites him in the discussion of winds (2.22.25).

4. Fronto, *Ad M. Caesarem et inuicem* 2.2.5.

II

Gellium audiui hoc dicere: se usum esse circumlocutione quadam poetica.

The various characters who parade before the footlights of the *Noctes* have already been discussed at some length by others before me. I wish only to recapitulate briefly some of the main points. Then I will go on to linger with a couple of select cases that contain the most fertile possibilities for exploring Gellius's own mask. We find a *Mousetrap*, a play within the play of the *Noctes*, and with it we can catch the conscience of the philological king, Gellius himself. But this requires that we be both good theater critics and ourselves players. Accordingly, I will resist a historical study of, for example, Taurus the man as revealed by Gellius.⁵ Instead, we are interested in Favorinus's performances of knowledge as restaged by Gellius. The logic of textual theatricality, though, entails a doubling of our sense of the performative.

Gellius researches the *ratio* of the word *indutiae*. He gives us the most reasonable answer of those he has either read or heard (1.25.12–13). Gellius researches *uiuaria*. He cannot remember ever reading the word in an ancient author. He has read *roboraria* in Scipio, the man who spoke more purely than anyone of his age. He has heard several learned men at Rome say that this word signifies what we mean when we say *uiuaria* (2.20.5). It is easy enough to keep speech and reading separate here even if we have to be a bit careful: there is past speech read today in old books and present speech about that speech. But a few sentences later, Gellius says of *apiaria*, “But I can recall almost nobody whose speech was pure who either wrote or spoke the word.”⁶ Do these recollections cover books, conversations, or both? Is he drawing a distinction between old orations and old technical treatises? If we wish to maintain the rigid speech versus writing divide, we will need to commit ourselves to answering such questions. Or we could abandon them.

But when I say that “Gellius says,” don’t I really mean to write that Gellius writes? After all, you and I are not in the same room. Nor, for that matter, are Gellius and I actually sitting together. I am being casual and sloppy, then, when I write the word “say.” However, look at the next sentence in Gellius 2.20: “However, Varro in book 3 of *De re rustica* says,

5. Lakmann 1995 offers precisely this. Holford-Strevens 1988:61–111 engages in the same kind of project but covers a number of the historical figures who appear in the *Noctes*.

6. “*Apiaria*” quoque uulgus dicit loca, in quibus siti sunt aluei apum; sed neminem ferme, qui incorrupte locuti sunt, aut scripsisse memini aut dixisse (2.20.8).

‘*melissonas*’⁷ Varro’s book speaks: *inquit*. The book speaks about how one ought to make places to store honey. Gellius, though, takes the obligation differently: how one ought to speak Latin is at issue, *mellaria* is what some people call *melissonas*, and *μελισσῶνες* is itself a Greek word (2.20.9). Varro’s rustic research in fact helps us to establish our urbane and pure Latin. Gellius repeats Varro’s speech only to find in it the honeyed tones of archaic Latin stored away for safekeeping. Recall that *Honeycomb* was one of the nontitles of the *Noctes* listed in the preface.⁸

One winter at the baths Favorinus sees a friend carrying a copy of Salust’s *Catiline*. Favorinus asks him to read from it. After the friend reads the passage on how avarice produces effeminacy, the effeminate Favorinus, greedy for an answer, turns to Gellius with a question: “How is it that avarice causes effeminacy in the human body?” Gellius replies that he too has long wondered the same thing and would have asked Favorinus this question (3.1.1–4). Gellius is about to speak when a follower of Favorinus breaks in: “*Valerium*” *inquit* “*Probum audiui hoc dicere: usum esse Sallustium circumlocutione quadam poetica et, . . .*” (3.1.5). Gellius writes that the man said . . . what? Either he said, “I have heard that Valerius Probus says this: Sallust was using a poetic circumlocution.” Or he said, “I have heard Valerius Probus say this: Sallust was using . . .” The difference is in the “that.” Did he hear Probus speak, or did he hear “that Probus says”? If we check our dates, it is hard not to conclude the latter: Probus is a Neronian-age critic. We are now roughly in the age of Hadrian. The present speaker ought not be too old; therefore, Probus was likely dead for at least ten or fifteen years before he was born. The appeal to chronology lets us make a decision about how indirect this report is.⁹ Also, the chapter itself immediately attacks this stated statement of Probus: Favorinus says that as far as he knows “our Probus” (*noster Probus*) was never guilty of an overclever explanation like that. Thus, the man may have heard “that” Probus said such a thing, but he certainly could not have heard Probus actually say it.

Neither Gellius nor the characters who speak within Gellius separate reading from speaking and past from present tidily. My previous chapter closed with observations on the anachronistic synchrony of the community of scholars. But now we can say that “inquiry” in Gellius is not the only

7. *M. autem Varro in libro de re rustica tertio: “Melissonas” inquit “ita facere oportet, quae quidam ‘mellaria’ appellant”* (2.20.9).

8. Later we will take a look at Macrobius, who is a busy-bee reader of Gellius.

9. Contrast 1.15.17: *Fauorinum ego audiui dicere uersus istos Euripidi* . . . This should be translated, “I heard Favorinus say . . .” not “I heard that Favorinus says . . .”

timeless activity. Speech itself, especially speech as written, likewise does not obey the simple logic of presence and absence, the immanent and the historical. As a consequence, all the scholars who have ever lived become characters who are available for walk-on roles in the *Noctes*.

III

Quae Fauorinum et Taurum egomet audiui dicere.

Despite his fondness for ancient usage, Gellius lends a very attentive ear to the proximate authority of the learned men of his own age. Fronto, Taurus, Apollinaris, and Favorinus each appear in a number of chapters, sometimes together. It is virtually unheard of for any of them to be wrong or to be bested in any of the innumerable philological conversations/competitions in which they are involved unless, perhaps, one of these stars should for a moment outshine another. As a group they provide a composite portrait of the different leading citizens of learning in Gellius's own day.

We have already seen Fronto play with the authority of Caesar by citing it (19.8). Gellius and others themselves watch with a sort of awe as Fronto performs his erudition and clamps down on an unnamed man who dares to suggest that Quadrigarius struck a false note by using *mortales* and not *homines* (13.29.5). But Fronto also knows how to yield. Fronto asks Apollinaris for his advice on *nani* (19.13). Fronto himself wants more information about an issue on which he is already fairly well informed. Fronto is not asking out of ignorance. In fact, one can imagine a sort of graciousness in submitting himself to Apollinaris's learning in this way.

It is also possible to imagine a trap. But the main characters of the *Noctes* tend to be nasty only to the minor and unnamed ones. For example, when some friends visit a gouty Fronto and the word *praeterpropter* is casually used, Fronto asks the man who used it what it means. The friend hands off the questions to a *grammaticus*. The *grammaticus* says that the word is too vulgar for him to know anything about it. Fronto shoots back that Cato and Varro and other ancient authors used it (19.10.10). The question was more a quiz, then. Julius Celsinus passes the test and gets his name inserted into the *Noctes*: he notes a verse of Ennius where the word appears. The unnamed *grammaticus* is now utterly ruined, and Fronto twists the knife: if Ennius used the word, then surely the man must know what it means. The *grammaticus* sweats. He blushes. And amid the cruel laughter of all, he rises and leaves with a lame attempt to save face: "I'll talk to you later alone about this, Fronto" (19.10.14). But in the *Noctes* a Fronto does not offer a private colloquy to men like this.

Taurus the philosopher is the qualified commentator on philosophy more generally in the *Noctes*. Taurus offers a philosophical commentary on the scene of a sick man's suffering that includes a brief overview of the entire Stoic philosophy of nature (12.5). When Gellius has a question about a passage in Aristotle, he seeks out Taurus for an explanation (19.6). Gellius shows Taurus sending an errant disciple a passage from Aristotle in order to correct him (20.4). And Taurus is very playful and ironic with Gellius when Plato's *Symposium* is read during what may be a symposium at the philosopher's house: Taurus toys with Gellius's love of rhetoric and language as it relates to this dialogue about love (17.20). Taurus willfully blurs the distinction between rhetoric and philosophy when impressing Demosthenes into the service of moral philosophy as he upbraids an unnamed youth who had "shamefully" (*inhoneste et improbe*) abandoned rhetoric for philosophy (10.19). Even as Gellius's relationship to philosophy may be read by the hostile as dilettantish and muddle-headed,¹⁰ the portrait of Taurus clearly authorizes a failure to commit oneself exclusively to philosophy.

Tulpius Apollinaris was once Gellius's teacher. He thus represents the good grammarian insofar as such appears in the *Noctes*. After all, the great Fronto asked his opinion (19.13). Gellius recalls moments from his school days with Apollinaris (18.4). At an uncertain date Gellius sits and reads with Apollinaris in the library of Tiberius's palace (13.20): Gellius may or may not be a student here, but Apollinaris is certainly behaving in a kind and magisterial manner. When he is at least a bit older and named a judge, Gellius goes to Apollinaris to ask him about the precise meaning of the phrase *intra Kalendas* (12.13).¹¹ And yet now that Gellius is a scholar in his own right, he can also praise an argument of Apollinaris while casting doubt on it (2.16).

Gellius pays close attention to Favorinus and his opinions. Several scenes from Favorinus's bookish parties are recorded in the *Noctes* (2.22, 3.19). Gellius is there when Favorinus is at the baths (3.1), the forum (13.25), the vestibule of Caesar (20.1), and the house of a man with whom Favorinus is staying (17.10). We also see Favorinus correcting various *grammatici* or tricking them into errors (4.1, 13.25). And Gellius is constantly citing recollections of Favorinus's opinions either in passing or as the theme of a whole chapter (3.16.16, 5.11.8, 17.19, 19.3). Favorinus is present in seven first chapters of various books of the *Noctes*; nobody else is as frequently given such

10. Holford-Strevens 1988:192.

11. Gellius depicts himself as both judge and *adulescens* in 14.2.

a leading role in these prominent segments of the text. As Marache notes, Favorinus is Gellius's ideal man.¹²

One aspect of Favorinus's status as an ideal, though, is his willingness to listen as well as to speak and to judge. Though clearly more authoritative than Gellius, Favorinus offers a much more interesting double and ideal for Gellius than do some of the others. Favorinus is the authority that is most likely to yield to authority. Favorinus yields without exactly yielding to Fronto. Fronto offers a rejoinder to Favorinus's praise of Greek words for color at the expense of Latin ones. Favorinus praises Fronto's performance with a set of citations and the comment that were it not for Fronto he never would have understood a certain passage in Ennius that he then quotes (2.26.21). One authority recognizes a second authority but also reestablishes his own claims to mastery by allowing the conversation to end when he clearly still has vast stores of erudition in reserve. The scene parallels 20.1, where Favorinus yields to the jurist in the discussion of law.

Favorinus is more clearly out of place in the *Noctes* than are some of the other luminaries. Latin is not his native language. Rome is not his native land. And though gender is generally effaced in the *Noctes*, we can add the biographical note as well that masculine authority is not exactly native to Favorinus's body.¹³ Gellius too is always present but absent, speaking but listening, where he should be but also out of place, authoritative but always also earning and proving an authority of his own that is not perfect and perfectly consolidated.

A foe of Favorinus might well attack him in terms that would recall the sorts of labels that could be attached to Gellius himself. Conversely, a partisan of Gellius would praise him in terms that recall his own portrait of Fronto: polite, giving opinions via citations and not his own voice, and a champion of the laborious and judicious search for old words.¹⁴ And of course, Favorinus is a model, as is the grammarian Apollinaris, as is the philosopher Taurus. That is, the author of the *Noctes* does not just insert these men as characters into his text, but he indicates that his text itself reflects an incorporation of the spirit of their scholarship on the part of Gellius himself. Or, rather, the *Noctes* both embodies and bodies forth these men: it swallows, ruminates, and digests, but it also preserves them

12. Marache 1952:255.

13. In one of the rare chapters on gender transgression, the reproaches heaped on Demosthenes and Hortensius recorded in 1.5 can also be taken as an implicit defense of Favorinus, who is never, though, thus criticized in the *Noctes* themselves. See also Keith 2000:22–23 on the gender politics of 6.12.

14. Compare Marache 1952:203–6.

whole. We see Saturn eating not his children but his parents. He regurgitates this fine fare for his children and readers that they may nourish themselves therewith.¹⁵

IV

Adulescens hic sine controuersia eruditus est.

Fronto, Taurus, Apollinaris, and Favorinus provide masterful exemplars of various types: the Latinist, the Philosopher, the Grammarian, the Hellenist. The drama of the *Noctes* consists in part in watching them as they compete with and overcome a variety of lesser foes.¹⁶ Some of these antagonists are past scholars, but a number of them are either full-grown impostors or youthful upstarts. Few of these opponents are named. Accordingly, we behold a spectacle of the making of the heroic central figures by way of a series of *agones* in which the great men cut down a faceless host of sham savants.

The process forges one set of men by means of the unmaking of another. However, there is a secondary action as well: the construction of Gellius. Gellius is the *adulescens* who listens and learns, who speaks and who is listened to, who matures and ripens. Taurus upbraids a youth who speaks in an excessively archaic manner (1.10). Gellius has narrowly avoided the same pitfall. A youth proud of his rhetorical attainments asks that Antonius Julianus listen to him as he declaims (9.15). He is set an impossible topic, but he nevertheless blasts forth a flurry of verbiage. Amid the adulation of the youth's entourage, Julianus endures the display in discomfort, and Gellius shows us that he saw what the youth was too blind to see for himself. Julianus is upset, embarrassed, sweating, and flush (9.15.10). When pressed for his opinion about the show, Julianus offers a quip in reply that ends the chapter, "Indeed, this young man is eloquent without any controversy" (*adulescens hic sine controuersia disertus est*; 9.15.11). A *controuersia* is both a declamation and a controversy. The praise is thus also blame. However, there is nothing controversial about the case of Julianus and the way he impeached the upstart youth. The eloquence of the master gets the refined last word. Though there is no indication here that Gellius is himself actually young when this scene occurred, it is nevertheless the case that because Gellius was an attentive student of men like Julianus, he

15. See Anderson 1994:1839 and the striking image of a Gellius with an "appetite for regurgitation."

16. Holford-Strevens 1988:50 stresses that many of the scenes in Gellius should be read as invented and not as actual conversations. This view is seconded by Kaster 1995:245.

himself evaded the blunders of such a youth. Specifically, Gellius knows how to watch Julianus rather than to insist that he himself be watched.

Gellius knows how to yield the limelight in the name of ultimately being the source of illumination more generally. Youths who express their learned opinion when asked for it by a master are praised (13.20). And a youth who defends himself ably against the ignorant objections of an ill-educated man also cuts a good figure (17.3). But youths who challenge authority in the name of their own cleverness and recently acquired learning are blamed.¹⁷

However, *adulescentes* do not appear only in the “real world” of the *Noctes*; they people not just Gellius’s own day, but they can be found as well in a number of the passages cited within the *Noctes*. For example, Democritus admires and then teaches a young Protagoras (5.3). But then an older Protagoras teaches rhetoric to Eualthus, who then attempts to avoid paying for his training (5.10). One gets the feeling that Gellius would have us see a continuity of the ideology of good and bad youth throughout the ages. This vision also transcends the borders between the world of the citations and that of Antonine Rome proper.

V

Quae Varronem et Nigidium dicere legi.

Even, then, as the fights rage between Favorinus and his detractors in the dramatic setting of the *Noctes*, we see as well a second set of quarrels and a second chronological order. The scholars of the past are also characters present in the *Noctes*. And in fact, the degree to which their activities and their voices are really in and of the past remains pointedly ambiguous. Varro may well be authoritative because of his antiquity, but neither the letter nor the spirit of his scholarly practice differs from that of the men of Gellius’s own day. Or at least, there are strategic advantages to be gained by the later Romans to the extent that they foster the sense that they themselves cannot be distinguished from their predecessors.

The story of Caesar and his authority has already been told, and this is perhaps the most important example of the phenomenon. A second tier of scholars, though, also lived in that same age that abutted the advent of the empire and saw the death of a republic whose diction is so zealously recorded by the antiquarians. Meanwhile, the spirit of republicanism

17. And Gellius writes proudly of a youthful encounter where he demonstrated to a *grammaticus* his superior knowledge of Ennius and the branches of learning required to appreciate the poet (20.10).

is very much left to rest in peace. Varro and Nigidius are Gellius's two favorite antiquarians. Contemporaries of Julius Caesar, they wrote variously on Rome's past. It is still possible to read substantial pieces of Varro himself. Nigidius exists largely owing to Gellius's citations of him.

Holford-Strevens observes that "Varro is cited for every field of knowledge in which Gellius takes an interest, and from a range of his writings."¹⁸ The *index nominum* of the Oxford edition of the *Noctes Atticae* supports this claim. Moreover, the index entry for Varro in Holford-Strevens's book *Aulus Gellius* begins, "*passim*." That is, a discussion of Gellius himself will plausibly mention Varro throughout. The index entry for Nigidius in the *Noctes* is significantly shorter than that for Varro, but it does reveal him to be Gellius's second favorite scholar.

Past scholars, though, straddle the boundary between scholars and ancients for Gellius. That is, they produce commentary, and that commentary is cited qua scholarship. But they are also ancient, and thus their words have that extra patina of authority that is acquired with age. And as old authors, they are also potentially objects of Gellius's own research rather than sources to be cited in the course of research. They thus occupy multiple simultaneous orders of knowledge: they are knowers and to be known; their words have a value *sub specie aeternitatis aetatisque*.¹⁹ One can take either of the conjoined elements, the eternal and the chronologically specific, separately. They can be taken together. They can be taken sequentially. The possibilities are fluid.

Gellius has learned, we know not how, that Varro and Nigidius, the most learned men of the Roman stock, did not speak other than as they wrote: the genitive of *domus* was always *domuis* for them (4.16.1). These ancient antiquarians were already antique in their own age: their writing and speech was not contemporary with their own age. Varro and Nigidius left behind Latin works that produced a problem for certain other "ancient grammarians," that is, grammarians who came after Varro and Nigidius and yet nevertheless still manage to be *ueteres* for Gellius. These *grammatici* wanted to supplement the authority of Varro and Nigidius's practice by making a hard and fast rule about genitives in *-uis*.²⁰ We have already seen what comes next: Gellius fights with these "old" *grammatici* who are

18. Holford-Strevens 1988:117.

19. Cato is definitely ancient, and he is also a scholar. However, he is generally cited for how he uses language in his speeches and not for the contents of what he says in his technical writings.

20. *Hanc eorum auctoritatem quidam e ueteribus grammaticis ratione etiam firmare uoluerunt* (4.16.3). The antecedent of *eorum* is Terence, Varro, and Nigidius.

fumbling with the problem of old speech by ultimately appealing to Caesar. What concerns us at present, though, is the manifold question of anachronism. Varro and Nigidius are ancient authorities about ancient authority. Their research has produced not just writings about antiquity but antique writings and antique speech: their fourth-declension genitives are archaic. The readers of Varro and Nigidius then lump the two together with Terence, a much more genuinely archaic author.

The anachronism of Varro and Nigidius yields yet another anachronism: Gellius is assailing *ueteres grammatici* who appear to live in the imperial age even though the end of the republic is usually the hard and fast boundary between the old and the not-old for Gellius. The adjective *uetus* conjures names like Cato, Scipio, and Plautus, That is, it evokes people who lived before the late republic and the age of Varro. These “old grammarians,” who are not all that old, are trying to figure out a rule about “old speech” by way of the anachronistic speech/writing of Varro and Nigidius. The student of antiquarian knowledge constantly risks being swallowed by it and also becoming untimely: it happened to Varro, it happened to readers of Varro, and, yea verily, it could happen to you too.

One ought to acquire the habit of keeping track of old words. And yet, it can be a bad habit, but only if you are called out on it. Better, then, to be seen knowing, to be seen having read, to be forever citing by way of performance rather than to actually perform *in propria persona*. One can don the mask of Varro the archaizer, and one can cite with approval his anachronisms. But it would be unwise to oneself speak in one’s own voice as the ancients wrote.²¹ Scholars are actors, but it is important to perform distance and to perform difference rather than to be consumed by one’s role. That is, a strategic gap is maintained between the self and authority, and this gap is isomorphous with the gap between present and past, knower and thing known. Yorick’s skull is held at (Shandian) arm’s length.

One day in a bookshop a boastful man was going on as if he were the only person qualified to expound Varro’s *Satires* (13.31). Gellius puts him to a cruel test. He picks out some verses and challenges the fellow to read them and then to tell him the meaning of the maxim contained therein. The man commands Gellius himself to read instead. Gellius replies that he cannot read the verses because he does not know what they mean. Throughout this scene Gellius’s use of “to read” blurs “to read aloud and with correct pronunciation” and what we frequently understand by reading,

21. See the earlier discussion of 1.10.

namely, “to understand.” In antiquity “proper reading” generally embraces both performance and comprehension simultaneously. The implications of this double aspect of reading are profound inasmuch as it makes alien knowledge multiply “illegible,” and it implies that authoritative knowledge is always also yoked to authoritative (re)performances of knowledge.²²

The man who has said he knows Varro superlatively, it turns out, fails the test put to him by Gellius. Gellius wonders if we can possibly believe how miserably the man failed to read the text. The ideas get chopped up, and the individual words are mispronounced (13.31.9).²³ The fellow hands back the book, complaining about difficulty with his eyes, but we know full well that the problem is with their training, not with their weariness or the difficulty of the hand in which the book was written. Gellius naturally presses his advantage: if the man cannot read the book, then maybe he can at least tell him what *caninum prandium* means in the passage he “read” (13.31.12). The faker starts up in terror and says, as he exits the shop, that he does not teach things like that for free. Gellius, without asking a penny of us, transcribes the passage and explains it to his readers. Of course, one wonders if we can really read this explanation before we have read to the end of the chapter. But this question only itself evokes the anachronistic synchrony of antiquarianism and its retroactive futurity: “we will have read” and thus “we will have arrived” where we were headed: in a future-cum-past perfect.

In this episode, then, we see the scholar Varro become the object of scholarly inquiry. Satirist Varro is read by antiquarian Gellius in the manner that antiquarian Varro would read him(self). Of course, the scene that frames the whole is itself something of a satire whereby the *homo inepte gloriosus* and the *egregius nebulo* is mocked. And the man flees from the bookshop and from the pages of the *Noctes* simultaneously. That leaves Gellius and his reader alone together for a serious chat about the *Satires*.

This episode with its elaborate topography of knowledge and scenography of authority is by no means unique. Gellius begins 13.13 by parading for us his entry into the public space after he had left behind the secluded corners filled with books and teachers and had stepped forth into the light

22. See Johnson 2000 for a careful analysis of the elitism multiply folded within the sociology of ancient “reading culture.”

23. Compare Lucian, *Aduersus indoctum et libros multos ementem* 19: Demetrius the Cynic shreds a beautiful text of the *Bacchae* that is being misread during the passage where Pentheus is himself torn to pieces. Said Demetrius, “It is better that Pentheus be rent once by me than many times by you” (Ἀμεινόν ἐστι τῷ Πενθεῖ ἅπαξ σπαραχθῆναι ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ ἢ ὑπὸ σοῦ πολλάκις).

of the forum.²⁴ Of course, he no sooner leaves the books than he returns to them, and he no sooner appears in public than he realizes that vital contemporary affairs require research. People want to know if a *quaestor* can be summoned to appear in court. Gellius has been reading Varro. All one has to do is compare two relevant portions of Varro's *Res humanae* and the answer is clear: yes.

Varro likewise finds his anachronistic place/nonplace in the private life of Gellius and his beloved reading parties. At such parties one may talk of Varro and even win a book of Varro. But it is also the case that Varro's *Menippean Satires* discusses the number of guests that one ought to invite to a party and how a party ought to be organized (13.11). A scholar throwing a scholarly party will, of course, have read what the scholar Varro in one of his festive books said about putting on a party. Varro even dictates the contents of the conversation at parties. It should be pleasant and agreeable. "This will happen," Gellius says Varro says, "if we chat about those sorts of things that relate to our common experience (*communem uitae usum*) of life, things that we do not have the leisure to speak of in the forum and as we are busy with our affairs."²⁵

Since the common experience of life for an antiquarian is the shared experience of books, and since the business of books is his business, even as Gellius cites the authority of Varro on parties, he necessarily violates that same authority. The *usus* of a scholar also means that he reads everything. That is, his business is all books, and the "forum versus party" distinction that Varro draws is effaced by the most reverent readers of Varro. This leads directly to a second abrogation of Varro's precepts. Varro says that not everything should be read at a party, but one chooses in particular those things that are both useful and pleasant: *In conuiuio legi non omnia debent, sed ea potissimum, quae simul sint βιωφελῆ et delectent* (13.11.5).

What I have just called an abrogation, of course, could also be characterized as a reaffirmation and validation of it. Virtually everything archaic should be read at a Gellian party because these are all useful for life—βιωφελῆ picks up and modifies *communem uitae usum*—and pleasant. The reading is indiscriminate in point of subject matter but specific as regards its time frame. This also necessarily implies that the sort of things one reads and discusses at a party might well be difficult subjects or items that pertain to affairs and the forum, but these difficulties are all "scholarly difficulties"

24. *Cum ex angulis secretisque librorum ac magistrorum in medium iam hominum et in lucem fori prodissent*, . . . (13.13.1).

25. *Quod profecto inquit eueniet, si de id genus rebus ad communem uitae usum pertinentibus confabulemur, de quibus in foro atque in negotiis agendis loqui non est otium* (13.11.5).

and the affairs of the forum are all always affairs of an ancient forum. And yet it is nevertheless also possible to discuss scholarship in the contemporary forum, and it is possible to use Varro on business in one's own business dealings.

Gellius produces for his reader a portrait of the double vision that ideally characterizes the antiquarian outlook more generally. One constantly sees both through one's own antiquarian eyes and through the eyes of antiquarian Varro. For Parties in Books, see (Gellius on) Varro on Parties. For Books about Parties, see (Gellius on) Varro on Parties. For Parties about Books, see (Gellius on) Varro on Parties. This seeing double comes from too much and too festive drinking/reading. This bibulous consumption to excess of books of ancient vintage colors a variety of other venues. Gellius behaves as a man who revels in the pages of Varro whether in the forum or at a party. *Per urbem bacchatur*.

VI

Sed quod in hoc libro scripsit, neque audisse neque legisse, sed ipsum sese in urbe Roma uidisse oculis suis confirmat.

This recursive relationship with past scholarship and the predecessor who is both a subject and an object of knowledge is not characteristic of the way Gellius reads all learned books. Postrepublican authors emerge more as parodic doubles than as uncanny ones. Their books tend to be handled as mere books even where they do strongly recall the *Noctes* themselves.²⁶ They are rivals and brothers competing for the same legacy, while Varro is more a father figure.

Gellius mentions the first-century CE scholar Apion three times. In a brief chapter on rings and the fingers on which they are worn, Gellius evokes Apion's account of the physiological foundations of the choice of finger (10.10). Apion's *Aegyptiaca* provides evidence, and aptly so given that the Alexandrians were famous for their dissections and infamous for their vivisections. But Apion's role as "authoritative philological source" and "man to be cited" is limited to this one passage. In the remaining two passages Gellius adduces Apion because of his proximity to the events described. And so in 6.8 Gellius proves that dolphins really are libidinous (*uenerios*) by appealing to an eyewitness account of one such episode penned by Apion. Gellius gives what is for him a relatively long quotation

26. Compare Holford-Strevens 1988:119–25.

from the original Greek. The boy and his dolphin have an *erastês/erômenos* relationship, and the dolphin even pines away and dies after the boy he loves falls ill and perishes. The fabulous quality of the narrative—Gellius usually avoids this kind of thing—is justified only because Apion says he saw it himself.

The third passage from Apion offers yet another marvelous story, but it also provides a more detailed description of the scholar, his work, and his methods as Gellius sees them. The still-famous story of Androcles and the lion is lifted from the *Aegyptiaca* and transported into the spectacle of the *Noctes* (5.14). It is also translated into Latin. But this is perhaps fitting: the original was a scene from a Roman show put on in the Circus. Rather than eating its victim, a lion exchanged warm greetings with a slave who was thrown to it. Caesar asks for an explanation. Androcles tells the story of befriending the lion. Caesar has the story written out and carried around for all the spectators at the show. Apion thus records both what he saw and what he read at the games. Gellius restages for us the spectacle of his own reading. Like Caesar, then, Gellius is an *editor* of an elaborate universe of knowledge. And like Caesar, Gellius insists on being told the story (of the story) of a marvel and having it carefully written out for his audience to read.

However, much as Caesar needs an explanation and justification for what he just saw, so too does the invocation of Apion as a source require an explanation and justification. And this is how Gellius's chapter opens. We are informed as to who Apion was, of his knowledge of Greek things, of the fame of his books, and of the books on Egyptian marvels. Then Gellius offers some critical remarks about Apion's methods:

Sed in his, quae uel audisse uel legisse sese dicit, fortassean uitio studioque ostentationis sit loquacior—est enim sane quam in praedicandis doctrinis sui uenditator—; hoc autem, quod in libro Aegyptiacorum quinto scripsit, neque audisse neque legisse, sed ipsum sese in urbe Roma uidisse oculis suis confirmat.

But when it comes to those things that he says he has either heard or read, he comes across as a bit of a chatterbox owing to an unfortunate zeal for self-display—he certainly is something of a huckster when it comes to pushing his own learning. However, he assures us that this episode in the fifth book of his *Aegyptiaca* is not something he either heard or read, but that he himself saw it with his own eyes in the city of Rome.

The uncharitable might wonder if the pot is not calling the kettle black. The distinction between Gellius and Apion is not radical. The more important issue is a subtle one: how one handles knowledge. Apion has managed to turn *studium* into a *uitium* owing to his passion for showing off. Furthermore, his relationship to books and learning takes on a mercantile feel. The good reader does not “sell himself” and his ideas; rather the good reader knows his place relative to the knowledge he acquires and transmits. The better sort of books are themselves not much on the market in Gellius: they are ideally acquired from friends, won at parties, or read in Caesar’s library.

Gellius writes that we can trust what he has read in Apion because it was not something that Apion has himself read. Apion the reader/hearer and reteller of knowledge has been impeached. Apion the spectator in Caesar’s circus can be trusted. However, we can trust that Apion can be trusted only after we put our faith in the reading/hearing skills of Gellius, the man who likes to look over old books in Caesar’s library and to discuss them in Caesar’s vestibule. Apion represents, then, both the failure of bookishness and its triumph. Apion cobbles together a book of wonders and then thinks himself wondrous for so doing. This is a failure. However, Gellius with his erudite eye rereads Apion’s book and extracts from it those episodes that can be salvaged, namely, the ones that Apion saw with his own eyes. The triumph of this process is Gellius’s Apion’s *Aegyptiaca*. That is, we have a second and improved edition of the first book. As Androcles told Caesar a story that Caesar caused to be written for Apion to read, so does Apion tell Gellius a story that Gellius causes to be written for us to read.

Gellius’s Pliny parallels Gellius’s Apion. Pliny is a rival from whom Gellius distances himself even as he reappropriates the contents of Pliny’s works for his own uses. As early as the preface, Gellius is engaging with Pliny. Not only is the title *Natural History* on the list of titles/nontitles for the *Noctes*, but the very catalog of catalogs that Gellius offers is already present in Pliny’s own preface.²⁷ But Pliny the encyclopedist needs re-reading if his knowledge is to be sanctioned for the disparate and by no means encyclopedic purposes of the *Noctes*. That is, we need Gellius to read Pliny the reader for us. And in the end, even though Gellius imagines his own reader as being predisposed to the consumption of many and various books, especially books about books, we are left with the sense

27. See Pliny, *Naturalis historia* pr. 24–26. Pliny himself objects to the kind of borrowing without attribution going on in Gellius earlier in his own preface (pr. 22). See also Marache 1967:xxiv.

that we should read only Gellius's Pliny and that the *Noctes* and not the *Naturalis historia* is the title that one should consult when in search of a bookish book.²⁸

Pliny has his limitations. Pliny, for example, failed to appreciate a reversible argument in one passage from his books titled *Libri studiosorum* (9.16). The most learned man of his age, or at least the man considered to be so (*existimatus*), stumbled. Despite the studiousness of its author, the book offered to the studious is revealed to be a flawed book if one studies it closely enough. Although Pliny records therein a variety of declamatory trinkets that ought to delight the ear of the reader, Gellius detects a false note. And thus he decides to plead a declamatory case against Pliny's declamation. If declamation is the mere image of oratory, such fighting over a declamation provides the image of the image of oratory. And yet the fight has real consequences for how one approaches the imagined relationship between the two authors:

Fugit autem Plinium sententiam istam, quam putauit esse argutissimam, uitio non carere, quod Graece ἀντιστρέφον dicitur. Et est uitium insidiosum et sub falsa laudis specie latens; nihil enim minus conuerti ex contrario id ipsum aduersus eundem potest atque ita a priore illo uiro forte dici . . .

But Pliny failed to appreciate that that phrase that he thought to be superlatively eloquent contained that flaw which in Greek is called ἀντιστρέφον. It is an insidious flaw, and it lurks beneath the false semblance of merit. For that same argument can be turned around against that same fellow, and thus the first hero can say . . .

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 9.16.7

This is the only citation of the *Libri studiosorum* in the *Noctes*. That is, the only thing worthy of note in the book for the studious is the passage where the author slips up. Not only does the argument itself get reversed, but so too does the concept of studiousness itself: Gellius the reader inverts Pliny's text and uses it against him. This puts Gellius in the position of the *prior uir fortis*: he is the "first hero" from the inset declamation and not

28. Recent accounts of the complex task of reading Pliny's Pliny can be found in Carey 2003 and Murphy 2004. Carey 2003:20–40 offers a portrait of the paradoxes of a "totality" in Pliny that mirrors/captures the world. This thesis can be juxtaposed to my account of a "disparity" in Gellius that mirrors/captures an individual.

the belated arrival and passive reader of Pliny. It is a failing that Pliny did not note in the argument he cited. Gellius the reader insidiously uses this failing against Pliny in order to cut him down. And thus lurking beneath the false appearance of his praise for Pliny, we see a sort of viciousness to Gellius the reader: he is ready to wheel about (ἀντιστρέφειν) and to attack his sources.

Gellius is perfectly capable of using Pliny as he once did Apion, that is, as a source that helps him document an interesting ancillary detail of an argument. A good place to get hellebore is Anticyra (17.16.6). But this is itself something of a singular use. Gellius instead usually flags a potential problem in Pliny rather than using him as an authoritative source of knowledge. A subtle version of this happens at the end of the long chapter on gestation (3.16). There Gellius cites Pliny citing Masurius on a woman who was allowed to claim that her child born thirteen months after the death of her husband was the man's heir (3.16.23). Since, says Gellius, the story might seem to be beyond belief (*extra fidem*), he has given the words of Pliny himself. Gellius then tacks on a tiny note to end the chapter: "In the same book of Plinius Secundus these words are written, 'Yawning during childbirth is fatal, just as sneezing after sex produces an abortion.'" ²⁹ Gellius suspends any manifest judgment about either Pliny's *ratio* or his citation of *ratio*. Gellius also does not say anything manifestly critical about the story itself or the authority of either Pliny or Masurius. ³⁰ One does, though, walk away with the latent sense that there is something flawed in the *Natural History*.

In two other passages, though, Gellius is much more explicit about the kind of reservations a reader might have when perusing Pliny. Gellius records with disgust what Pliny records about Democritus in book 28 of the *Natural History*: *ex quibus pauca haec inuiti meminimus, quia pertaesum est* (10.12.1). Pliny's book deforms the *Noctes* inasmuch as Gellius's book is in general a collection of fond recollections of things read. But Gellius does derive a kind of pleasure here: he vindicates Democritus from the silly stories that are attached to him that go beyond belief (*ultra humanem fidem*; 10.12.3). Gellius makes Pliny's specific failing generic. Gellius declares that extremely clever minds are tripped up by the fallacious enticements of marvels of this sort. In fact, they are the more inclined to be deceived the

29. In eodem libro Plini Secundi uerba haec scripta sunt: "Oscitatio in nixu letalis est, sicut sternuisse a coitu abortiuum" (3.16.24). This is Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 7.42.

30. Nor does Gellius seem to have any direct relationship to the medical tradition that Pliny himself elides in the name of the unusual fact. The sneeze feels much less odd when surrounded by arguments such as those found in Soranus, *Gynaeciorum libri* 1.60–61.

more desirous they are of learning.³¹ “But,” he says, “I return to Pliny” (*Sed redeo ad Plinium*; 10.12.5). Did he ever leave him? The story of a genius who, though praised, nevertheless slips reminds us of the similar mistake made in the *Libri studiosi*. And we see that Pliny is in fact a repository of things that exceed belief and that therefore need to be read cautiously. Pliny has in effect become one of those men whose baleful cleverness (*hominibus istis male sollertibus*; 10.12.8) leads them to believe that they can fob off their fictions on Democritus. They use the *auctoritas* and the *nobilitas* of the great man as a refuge for their ill behavior. The *uitium* of logic from above has become a *uitium* of the scoundrel-as-scholar here. Gellius himself, though, also rushes to Democritus’s aid. He does so in order to vindicate the philosopher and to free him from the shackles of other men’s lies that have been heaped on him. It makes no difference whether Pliny himself is a smith who forges such bonds, or if he is just another who by concatenating a chain of bogus references exacerbates the crisis: Pliny is part of the problem. Gellius’s keen eye for genuine antiquities provides the solution.

Gellius has still more to say about Pliny and how one might read him. When Gellius is returning from Greece and its Attic nights, he puts in at Brundisium. The scenography parallels 16.6, where we saw Gellius sport with the shoddy *litterator*. This time, though, he is going to discredit bad books. As he wanders around, he sees all sorts of books set out for sale. They are Greek books and filled with marvels. The contents of the volumes are multiply discredited. The books are full of miracles and tales; the events are unheard of, unbelievable. However, the writers are ancient and of no little authority.³² Thus, in contradistinction to the contents of the volumes, their authors do nevertheless potentially recommend them. Gellius buys a number of them, reads them, and takes notes. He has even sprinkled some of the material, he says, throughout the text of the *Noctes* itself (9.4.5).

For this chapter Gellius plucks out a few flowers from the bouquet and presents them as an illustration: tales of the semimonstrous men who live at the ends of the earth. As he reads of these marvels, Gellius discovers items that he will later read once again in Pliny’s *Natural History* (9.4.7). Gellius then breaks off in the middle of his notes of marvels he noted in those books by insisting that he felt disgust recording things that had nothing

31. This is a loose paraphrase of Gellius himself: *oportuit nos dicere, quid de istiusmodi admirationum fallaci inlecebra sentiremus, qua plerumque capiuntur et ad perniciem elabuntur ingenia maxime sollertia eaque potissimum, quae discendi cupidiora sunt* (10.12.4).

32. *Erant autem isti omnes libri Graeci miraculorum fabularumque pleni, res inauditae, incredulae, scriptores ueteres non paruae auctoritatis: Aristee Proconnesius et Isigonus Nicaeensis et Ctesias et Onesicritus et Polystephanus et Hegesias* (9.4.3).

to do with what is useful for life (*usum uitae*; 9.4.12). The books that will have reminded Gellius of Pliny displeased Gellius in the then and there. This disgust that seized him, this *taedium*, thus parallels the *pertaesum est* of the Democritus chapter. Furthermore, we can contrast these books with Varro above and the injunction that a good party should include discussion that is suited to the *communem uitae usum* (13.11.5). And yet it is once again clear that the life of the scholar, his practices, and the things he finds useful may well lead him inevitably, albeit with disgust, to pick up certain sickening texts in the course of his scouring every kind of book. And yet he records everything, even his nausea. The *mal d'archive* entails as much.

Gellius, it will be objected, is not talking about Pliny; he is talking about bad Greek books. *Sed redeo ad Plinium*. The next section begins *libitum tamen est . . .* (9.4.13). “Nevertheless it is a pleasure . . .” *Taedet* has spun around and become *libet* without any warning: it is an anastrophe that reverses not the contents of the chapter but the affective valence of it. Gellius is about to take pleasure in recording in this unpleasant context some words taken from Pliny, a man who was praised for his learning “in his age.” Again we sense equivocation; the *laus Plinii* is qualified and restricted. It is a miraculous episode, but, says Gellius, one Pliny himself saw. Pliny is getting the Apion treatment: he did not read or hear this, but he says he knows and saw it.³³ Pliny says that the stories about women turning into men are not mere stories. Pliny had seen such a person himself. Gellius closes the chapter with a passage on hermaphrodites taken from Pliny.

Are such passages useful? Are they disgusting? Can you trust Pliny, even Pliny’s own eyes? Gellius implies that it is at least useful to learn how to read Pliny with the eyes that Gellius brings to such texts. A good antiquarian knows how to avoid the insidious vices of his source material. Once he has learned how to read properly, he is able to accumulate and to record with delight rather than revulsion, to learn to his profit and not to his detriment. What were once prodigies become instruments of pleasure. This metamorphosis allows us to reread the closing words of Gellius’s chapter, but with a difference: “This same Pliny in that same book wrote these words, ‘Human beings are born who belong to both sexes. We call them “hermaphrodites.” They were once called “androgyni” and considered to be prodigies. Now they are thought to be instruments of pleasure.’”³⁴

33. *non audisse neque legisse, sed scire sese atque uidisse in libro naturalis historiae septimo scripsit* (9.4.13).

34. *Idem Plinius in eodem libro uerba haec scripsit: “Gignuntur homines utriusque sexus, quos ‘hermaphroditos’ uocamus, olim ‘androgynos’ uocatos et in prodigiis habitos, nunc uero in deliciis”* (9.4.16).

VII

Qua ratione Tiro Tullius in libros Noctium Atticarum deductus est.

The list of notable names in Gellius has taken on the cast of a catalog of second selves. Each figure doubles a different aspect of Gellius; each evokes a different metaphorical resonance.³⁵ Some are Gellius but worse, others Gellius but more ancient and noble. If the friend is a second self, then Gellius has routinely found friends everywhere he looked: *alter identidem*. Or rather, the metaphor of digestion that Gellius himself uses of reading shows us even more vividly the way in which the books he reads become the person he is. These other authors are second selves inasmuch as Gellius's own consumption of their texts has been instrumental in his becoming the multiplicity of selves that he is.

Let us take one more look at a metaphorical double for Gellius. Cicero's freedman Tiro receives far more attention in the *Noctes* than is usual in ancient literature. Specifically, while every author is interested in Cicero, almost all of them are content to either read the great orator directly or to at least pretend that they are not getting him at second hand. Gellius, though, is fascinated by Tiro, a man who clearly stands between Cicero and himself. Gellius spends a good deal of time thinking through the life and writings of Tiro, the ex-slave and now scholar. The contradictions of Tiro's status—authoritative but subservient, on the cutting edge of criticism but committed to defending an arbitrary cause—mirror the ambiguities of Gellius's own position.

Tiro can serve as a source of evidence for antiquarian topics. That is, he can be just another font of information, a man who happens to provide answers to the question at hand. In the chapter on the order in which senators are asked their opinion in the senate, we learn that Tiro said that Cicero told him that Caesar explained to Cicero his reason for calling some senators out of order (4.10.6). Tiro is here but a link in the chain of custody of the knowledge itself.

When Gellius uses *tertium* in a letter to a friend, a scholarly hullabaloo erupts: shouldn't it have been *tertio*? (10.1.1–3). Even though we are inclined to smirk at such a thrice-tedious topic, it shortly becomes clear that Gellius and his friend are not just having a debate about republican Latin, but they are having a republican debate: Varro has written on just this point. Tiro expands Varro's brief and somewhat obscure (*subobscura*) account (10.1.7). And so Gellius the letter writer turned commentary writer quotes from a

35. See Jacob 2000:85 for the same phenomenon in Athenaeus.

letter of Tiro in which research on *tertium* is recorded. Or rather, the quote is not an exact quote; it is approximate, *ad hunc ferme modum*. The voice of Gellius and the voice of Tiro blur. Tiro as performed by Gellius said, then, that Pompey when he was going to dedicate his temple of Victory wanted to know if *consul tertium* or *tertio* should be used. Pompey puts the question to all the Roman antiquarians. Their opinions vary. Cicero, politic as ever, lest he contradict the learned, persuades Pompey to abbreviate and just to write “*tert.*” And so it was written, although one today, says Gellius, reads a restored inscription. It too recapitulates the original compromise as it reads *III* rather than either *tertium* or *tertio*.

Gellius adopts and adapts Tiro’s voice. He appropriates Tiro’s letter in order to justify what he has said in his own letter. And Gellius uses Tiro to supplement Varro when it is in fact the case that Gellius himself is constantly in a supplementary relationship to Varro: antiquarian obscurities and/or obscure antiquarians need rounding out by the intervention of other evidence or commentary from Gellius himself.

Tiro can also directly serve as a source of antiquarian arguments on antiquarian topics. Specifically, Tiro himself was an antiquarian, and he wrote many books on the Latin language (13.9.1). Gellius takes an argument from Tiro’s Πανδέκται and critiques it. The title of Tiro’s book perhaps rings a bell: *All-Embracer* was a title Gellius listed in his all-embracing catalog of titles not chosen for the *Noctes* (pr. 7). Tiro is, then, a competitor. His is treated accordingly. Gellius records and critiques Tiro’s account of the origin of the Latin name of the constellation called the *suculae*, the piglets. Tiro asserts that the early Romans made a blunder regarding the Greek name for the stars whereby ὕες and *sues* and ὕαδες got all confused. Gellius, though, defends the ancients from such a scandalous insinuation. Gellius then trots out some arguments about phonological transformations between Greek and Latin. These arguments are then joined with some etymological observations in order to produce Gellius’s own equally unexciting argument about the origin of the word *suculae*.³⁶

As the real point of the argument is a vindication of the past, we need not be surprised at its tortuousness. That is, the chapter is an attack on Tiro and his outlook in contradistinction to the proper love of antiquity evinced by Gellius. In fact, Gellius finishes the chapter by impugning Tiro’s ability to see the heavens more generally. Gellius declares that Tiro is mistaken when he says that these stars are part of the head of the Bull as this constellation

36. Specifically, even if *syades* really was the old word for the constellation, it still seems as if a false etymology is the only way to get from it to *suculae*.

has no head. We can compare the authoritative stargazing of 2.21 discussed above. The truly erudite man knows how to read the various components of a constellation, the stars whose ensemble makes a *signum* and/or the letters whose ensemble produces a sign/*signum*. Gellius knows both the *ratio* of the letters of the word *suculae* and the logic of the stars above. Tiro remains but a novice. He may receive all, but he cannot appreciate the night as can the *Noctes*.

Tiro most importantly, though, serves as the caretaker of Cicero and his works. Tiro produced masterful editions of his ex-master's texts. When Gellius wants to defend *futurum* for *futuram* in a passage of Cicero's *Verrines*, his opening move is to declare that he has been reading a text that is "of remarkable fidelity and that was established with the care and learning of Tiro."³⁷ Gellius seems to be appealing to the very same text again in 13.21. There the issue is choosing certain forms of words for the sake of their sound. Gellius says Cicero was so motivated when he wrote *peccatu* instead of *peccato* in the *Verrines*. Lest we declare that we recall no such moment in Cicero, Gellius appeals to Tiro's edition of the *Verrines* to support his reading (13.21.16).

Despite the confidence Gellius asks us to place in *Tironiana cura*, he also leaves room for one to wonder if another might not have been able to better care for Cicero's works. Gellius observes that there is a manifest error (*manifestum erratum*) in Cicero's *De gloria* (15.6). It does not require anyone of great learning, just someone who has read the seventh book of the *Iliad*, to realize that the passage Cicero translates into Latin is not, as Cicero says, spoken by Ajax to Hector. Gellius pretends to be surprised less that Cicero slipped than that the error was not caught and corrected either by Cicero himself or by Tiro, "his freedman, a most careful fellow, and a most attentive scholar of his patron's books."³⁸ Of course, Gellius might well be described as delighted rather than surprised. Gellius has lavished the scholarly care on the *De gloria* that Tiro had not. Gellius catches and corrects the error. In so doing he is playing either Cicero to Cicero or Tiro to Cicero. Perhaps he plays both.

The Homeric lines in question have not only been translated by Cicero into his text on glory, but the lines and their confusion can themselves be translated into the broader context of scholarly glory as it pertains to the

37. *In oratione Ciceronis quinta in Verrem in libro spectatae fidei Tironiana cura atque disciplina facto scriptum fuit: . . .* (1.7.1).

38. *Quamobrem non tam id mirabamur errasse in ea re M. Tullium, quam non esse animaduersum hoc postea correctumque uel ab ipso uel a Tirone, liberto eius, diligentissimo homine et librorum patroni sui studiosissimo* (15.6.2).

epic task of defending oneself, one's patron, and Cicero. It remains to be seen what, if any, differences there are between those three persons. Cicero said that Ajax spoke three lines in which he imagines a stranger reading his epitaph as he was going to fight Hector and did not know if he would survive. "Here lies a man who has long ago left behind life's light | Who once fell struck by Hector's sword. | Someone will say this; my glory will live forever."³⁹ The lines are, as Gellius points out, actually an epitaph imagined for Ajax by Hector as he speaks before both armies and not the product of Ajax's own fantasy.

Who is killing whom here? Whose is the glory? Whose the epitaph? Gellius slays Tiro in an imaginary battle conducted before the tomb of Cicero. This tomb/text/signifier (τόδε σῆμα) of a long-dead man is read aloud by Gellius. This act of reading revivifies Cicero's glory/*On Glory*, but it does so in a gesture that simultaneously wins κλέος ἄφθιτον for both Cicero and Gellius. This is precisely the logic of the original and the translation, of Homer and Cicero's Homer, and of Cicero and of Gellius's Cicero. The ritual return to the tomb of the dead hero allows readers of the glorious text of Cicero/the epitaph of Cicero to themselves write anew and rewrite a new-cum-old glorious text.

The fight over ambiguous signs is appropriately conducted by way of signs. Gellius's victory is fairly easy, though. To become a Homeric hero, all he needs to do is to have read Homer. Knowing that Hector spoke these lines allows Gellius to play both Ajax and Hector. Either can readily slay a Tiro. The more interesting battle ensues with Cicero himself: glory-minded Gellius imagines an *aristeia* in which the two meet on the field of glory/*On Glory*. This chapter becomes Gellius's *On On Glory*. Heroic Cicero falls; his armor is stripped; it is set up as a trophy. And yet one returns time and again to Cicero's *corpus*, to the glorious tomb of his writings in general, for it is only there that an antiquarian can begin to derive for himself his doubly derivative glory, the fame of an ex-slave who outdoes his ex-master/patron by becoming more Cicero than Cicero. One must first have been a slave before one can in the end engage with the forever-free, the one, the only, the original Cicero.⁴⁰

39. *hic situs est uitae iampridem lumina linquens, | qui quondam Hectoreo percussus cecidit ense. | fabitur haec aliquis, mea semper gloria uiuet* (15.6.3). This translates Homer, *Iliad* 7.89–91: ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος, | ὃν ποτ' ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ. | ὥς ποτέ τις ἔρρει· τὸ δ' ἐμὸν κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται.

40. Note that "fidelity to (ex-)master Cicero" is itself a motif of Cicero's letters to Tiro. See Gunderson 2007. Among these letters we also find an ironic philological correcting of a misuse of *fideliter* on Tiro's part (Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares* 16.17).

Chapter 6.3 is one of the longest of the *Noctes*, and it is certainly the longest in the text up to that point. The lemma tells you most of what you need to know: “What Tiro Tullius, Cicero’s freedman, reproached in Cato’s oration spoken in the senate on behalf of the Rhodians. And what I have answered to those things he reproached.”⁴¹ Tiro pleads against *On Behalf of the Rhodians*. Gellius pleads on behalf of *On Behalf of the Rhodians*. The tense of “Tiro reproached” is answered by the tense of “I/we answered.”⁴² That is, though one could imagine that the chapter is written in a sort of present tense, even before it begins it is already history. In fact it belongs to that same history from which Tiro’s own writing emerges: the synchronous time of criticism past.

Gellius praises Tiro’s erudition, but he notes that this man whose own social status was effectively dubious owing to his slave past overstepped his bounds: he dared more than one can forgive (*plus ausus est*); he took it upon himself overconfidently and with perverse cunning to conduct a thorough census (*percensuisse*) of that superlative speech of Cato the Censor (6.3.10). The gloves are off: Gellius feels free to reproach the freedman who reproached Cato (6.3.11).

Gellius shows a Tiro who is constantly contrasting his own theoretical commentary on how things ought to be done with the way Cato actually did them in the *Pro Rhodiensibus*. Another way of reading this would be to see a Ciceronian rhetorical tract penned by Tiro and offering a commentary on Cato, a commentary that was originally sent as a letter to a friend of Cicero (6.3.10). That is, we could describe Tiro as perhaps carving out a space for a “modern,” Ciceronean aesthetic by way of a commentary on an archaic author.

This commentary of Tiro has now become a part of Gellius’s *commentarii*. Specifically, Gellius’s commentary is a commentary on Tiro. And so too is it a second commentary on Cato. In fact, the two actions proceed in tandem. Gellius thus notes that Tiro has failed to note that one kind of rhetorical opening suits a senator who had been consul and censor and who is now addressing international affairs, and another for a patron defending his clients before a jury (6.3.17). The freedman is numb to status; Gellius has a keen feel for it. Tiro knows the schoolbook rules memorized by young up-and-comers; Gellius knows the savoir-faire of the old aristocracy.

Gellius both reads Tiro reading Cato and himself rereads Cato. There is no immediate experience of Cato here. Instead, the encounter with Cato is

41. *Quid Tiro Tullius, Ciceronis libertus, reprehenderit in M. Catonis oratione, quam pro Rodiensibus in senatu dixit; et quid ad ea, quae reprehenderat, responderimus* (6.3.lemma).

42. Compare *respondimus* in the last section of the chapter (6.3.54).

an encounter with the embattled text of Cato. There may be an impulse to “get back to the original” here, but that journey toward an encounter with the authentic meaning is precisely that, a journey. We do not find a sense of immediacy, of appearing in the presence of Cato. And this journey begins with scholarship and/as antagonism. The proper reading of Cato marches side by side with an improper misreading of him. That is, Gellius is carving out a space for a modern archaizing aesthetic by way of a commentary on a commentary on an archaic author.

The journey toward contemporary archaism ends with a portrait of the future: “One will have read . . .”

Commodius autem rectiusque de his meis uerbis, quibus Tullio Tironi respondimus, existimabit iudiciumque faciet, qui et orationem ipsam totam Catonis acceperit in manus et epistulam Tironis ad Axium scriptam requirere et legere curauerit.

A more full and fitting appraisal and judgment concerning my response to Tullius Tiro will be available to anyone who lays hold of Cato’s whole oration and who also takes the trouble to search out and read Tiro’s letter to Apion.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 6.3.55

Only now that the journey is over can we be trusted to go to the library and encounter Cato for ourselves. We will also, though, make sure to get our hands on Tiro as well. We end enjoined to perform the action of the whole chapter but on a larger scale. The perfect subjunctive implied in the lemma, “that I have read . . .” is now converted into a future perfect, “you will have read.” Once you will have read what Gellius has read, you will then form a judgment about his judgment, that is, you will form precisely the same judgment. This is a judgment that casts a verdict on Tiro and the judgments he formed when he read: Tiro is a mere novice when it comes to literary battles; he has yet to earn his *rudis*.

The diction of simulated fights is not merely my pun on Tiro’s name. In fact, Gellius himself talks of real as opposed to sham battles. Gellius notes that Cato has recourse to the full armory of rhetoric, and that Cato does not deploy his weapons after the fashion of fake battles and ones that give pleasure (6.3.52). The martial metaphor then both is and is not a “mere” metaphor when applied to Cato. His oration fights as a soldier actually fights. Tiro, conversely, seems to desire a kind of effete and modulated oratory that merely recalls actual warfare.

If we stick to the idiom of gladiators and shows, though, we can say that Gellius the *summa rudis* pounds on Tiro for our edification. Or is it Cato the *summa rudis* who pounds on Tiro while Gellius plays the *editor*, the man who puts on the show? The confusion is not just edifying; it is edification itself. That is, we learn by watching, and we learn by watching Tiro fall on the bloody sands of criticism. We learn both of the greatness that is Cato and of a parallel greatness in Cato's reader Gellius. Gellius shows, then, Tiro reading Cato so as to simultaneously reveal himself to be the *uir bonus legendi peritus*. The case of Tiro ideally prompts us to cast a verdict on Gellius himself. The only problem here, though, is that the real fighter Cato has necessarily become a fake one in the process. Real oratory, though praised, becomes only the image of real oratory.

But, you will say, surely this mischaracterizes; surely this is but a part of the story. If I am accused of offering a *pars pro toto* and therewith a shabby synecdoche, then you are welcome to take in your hand and to read the whole of Gellius's oration against Tiro's tirade against Cato's oration.

Inique igitur Tiro Tullius, quod ex omnibus facultatibus tam opulentae orationis aptis inter sese et cohaerentibus paruum quippiam nudumque sumpsit, quod obtrearet, tamquam non dignum M. Catone fuerit, quod delictorum non perpetratorum uoluntates non censuerit poeniendas.

And so it was unfair of Tiro Tullius to select out from such a rich speech with all those virtues fitted one with the other and bound up as a whole a certain small and bare portion to criticize as if it was not worthy of Marcus Cato that he did not think that one should punish the intention to do wrong when a person had not actually transgressed.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 6.3.54

This sentence comes immediately before the closing segment of the chapter. Gellius tells us to grab the whole of Cato and the whole of Tiro there. Here he accuses Tiro of laying hold of but a part of Cato. And by taking this part out of context, Tiro has failed to read Cato for who and what he is. Tiro actually transgresses, even if he did not intend to do wrong. In fact, Tiro intended to do right by righting the unintentional wrongs of Cato's oration. Gellius turns the whole enterprise around on him.

This problem of parts and wholes, though, is no mere problem.⁴³ It is a fundamental issue complicating reading within the *Noctes* and reading the

43. See again Sharrock 2000.

Noctes themselves. The “whole” that is the *Noctes* consists only of parts. To read the whole of the *Noctes*, to read carefully and conscientiously in search of its rich faculties and their coherence entails confronting a collection of “representative” parts. And yet one is left wondering, what, exactly, do they represent? Do they represent the spirit of their original inscription or the spirit of this secondary presentation of them within the all-receiving embrace of the *Noctes* as Πανδέκται?⁴⁴ The whole is forever both falling short of and exceeding the sum of its parts even as an account of the *Noctes* itself both exceeds and falls short of its (derivative) original. To the extent that Gellius supplements the original and adds to it, then we have a logic of too much. Where he truncates the original and displaces it, then we have a logic of both too much and too little. In either case we wind up in the presence of a not-whole, a scholastic *objet petit a* that stands in for and in the way of an ecstatic encounter with the Thing in Itself. But let us note that while a nostalgia for presence and the refinding of the lost thing may well animate our own *libido noscendi*, they do not guarantee an actual encounter on our part with *cet obscure objet du desire*.

VIII

Idem tert. enerratum est.

But this is all so seemingly abstract, this talk of books and of fragments. We were speaking of characters, of real antiquarians. And yet these characters were themselves seldom more than fragments of their own books. And so too were they fragments of Gellius, broken pieces of a mirror held up for inspection of now this, now that part of the other-as-self and the self-as-other. It is time, then, after a survey of the list of names in Gellius to examine the last name on the list, Gellius in Gellius. But there is more than one Gellius in Gellius. Gellius is both an ambiguous and an obscure figure, even though/precisely because only an antiquarian could archive both the thesis of ambiguity and that of obscurity simultaneously without feeling the remorse of contradiction.⁴⁵

In a novel one fruitfully keeps separate the author, the narrator, and the characters. The author Herman Melville writes a book narrated by a man we are instructed to call Ishmael. This narrator is present in the story he recounts as a character. At times he catalogs the minutiae of the whaling

44. “It is of the essence of representation not only to represent something but to represent its own representivity” (Deleuze 1994:80).

45. Both Carole Bouquet and Angela Molina are Conchita, and there is nothing Mathieu can do about this.

industry. He generally takes few actions. He tends to be remembered for watching and reporting the doings of those sailing with him on the *Pequod*, and in particular for the account of Captain Ahab. It is useful to know that Melville himself was once a whaler, but that does not hinder us from distinguishing him from Ishmael. And Ishmael is clearly not Ahab.

The *Noctes Atticae* is a novel about books. Its author is Aulus Gellius. Its narrator is someone also called Aulus Gellius. This narrator is present in the story he recounts as a character. At times the narrator catalogs the minutiae of the erudition industry. The *Noctes* contains a variety of additional characters, but if one or more characters are present in a chapter, it is virtually certain that the character Aulus Gellius is among them.

It is more difficult to distinguish Gellius from Gellius from Gellius than it is to tell Melville from Ishmael from Ahab. The three Gellii not only have the same name, but they are similarly motivated. All three appear to be hunting for an elusive leviathan, great and hidden words buried in a sea of texts. Books are landed, their bodies rendered, their precious ambergris of choice and exquisite words extracted for use as a sublime perfume that will adorn the scholar's own speech and writings.

The narrator Aulus Gellius is immediately present to us in the text. He insists that he is no mere narrator, that he is instead to be identified with the historical personage Aulus Gellius, father, friend, scholar. Therefore, the preface is to be taken as the author's preface, not the narrator's preface. And yet we are already learning the rules of narration as they apply to the *Noctes*. And one of the chief rules is that living is reading, and reading is writing the *Noctes*. Moreover, the book is a treasure house of knowledge laid away as stores for Gellius and as a legacy for his children, says the author-narrator.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the reader is figured as a child and heir. But given that the reader is not just figured as Gellius's real and metaphorical descendent but is in fact likely to himself or herself be a scholar, it is all too easy to accept the invitation to conflate the author and the narrator given that the reader's own legitimacy qua recipient of this text is thereby underwritten.

The narrative voice of the *Noctes* frames the chapters. It introduces the material and the occasion. The reader generally knows who, what, when,

46. Yes, a *penus* is not a *thesaurus*. But see 1.15: from his *penus* Gellius can draw a number of citations about the tongue as a well-guarded θησαυρός. Gellius also informs us that the archaic Latin version of the *thesaurus* contains well-minted and properly signed signifiers, not just any old mass: *in eos non rude aes argentumque, sed flata signataque pecunia conderetur* (2.10.3). That is, the *penus litterarum ueterum* is always already an "archaic thesaurus."

and where within one or two sentences of any given chapter. The narrative voice also provides the reader with ample cues as to the proper reading of the various scenes as they unfold: it attaches adjectives such as *doctus* to the various inset speakers; it brands some with nouns such as *nebulo*; it records the sadistic smiles and laughter that herald triumphs and attend defeat. The attentive reader, in short, will seldom get lost.⁴⁷

The narrative voice, though, arrogates to itself very little manifest authority. It generally disappears as soon as it arrives. It introduces a central authority and then itself retreats to an unseen periphery.⁴⁸ However, even as the narrator subtracts himself from the *Noctes*, if we ourselves allow him to do this without commenting on the gesture, no matter how excellently/fittingly (*commodatissime*) he might perform this act, we detract not only from the elegance of the *Noctes* as a textual performance but also from its tropology of authorizing (non)authoritative reception.

This is not to deny that the narrator is evanescent. On the contrary, it is to affirm the narrator as a presence that is pointedly latent. A chief narrative function within the *Noctes* is self-elision. The narrator is the smile without a cat that hovers paradoxically before our view out onto the wonderland of the *Noctes*.

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where—” said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

“—so long as I get *somewhere*,” Alice added as an explanation.

“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

Chapter after chapter opens with this same disappearing act. “Tradition tells us that . . .” “Aristotle writes . . .” “Favorinus said . . .” And we wander from chapter to chapter, going somewhere but never clearly heading anywhere in particular. Of course, if we read long enough, we absolutely arrive somewhere. We reach the same nonplace the narrator has reached before

47. This does not mean, though, that one cannot get lost: the text is labyrinthine. But the problem can be an artifact of the way one reads the *Noctes*: it is frequently mined for its word nuggets. In the process what narrative cues there are can be ignored or effaced.

48. Steinmetz 1982:281: “In solchen ‘Erinnerungen,’ ‘Denkwürdikeiten’ oder ‘Memoiren’ spielt das Ich des Autors in der Regel nur die Rolle des interessierten Zuhörers.”

us, namely, a well-stocked storehouse of erudition from which the Attic book we are reading was drawn.

However, the narrator does not only disappear. Sometimes he stays on in a chapter to adjudicate issues. "Some people say X, but Bassus says Y. However, Varro says Z."⁴⁹ One wanders in tandem with the narrator along a set course through the library. He points out highlights along the way. And some passing remarks are frequently offered sotto voce by way of an endnote to a chapter. The narrator can begin with an abstract issue expressed in relatively universal terms. But by the end of the chapter one generally discovers that specific authors or authorities have prompted this general observation. It is in fact very rare for Gellius to talk about an abstract topic without invoking at some point the concrete opinions of some third party concerning that topic. The authority of the narrative voice, then, almost never stands on its own: it is the authority of cited authorities. Whether a chapter starts with authorities or builds to them, the narrator in both cases frequently functions as an *editor*, the producer of a show who pits one text against another, the producer of a text that is published for all to read.

Still, at times the narrator himself enters the fray. The narrator periodically takes on for a moment the likeness of a character. Already in the virtual tour through the library one can feel this. If we focus on the gesture of bringing these and no other texts together right here and right now, then we catch a glimpse of a dramatic agency. Likewise, we see fleeting apparitions of a character named Gellius, who swiftly merges into the narrator Gellius: "I was reading . . ." If we linger on the activity, then we can conjure up the character. But this character also routinely fades from sight as soon as it is presented: the contents of the book read are instead thrust into the foreground. "Since I have read . . .," *legerim*, is an idea that subsists throughout the *Noctes*, and it is one that in its subjoined latency merges the author with the narrator with the character. It is, then, a verbal form that yields to the indicative in the name of the flow of the central narrative in any given chapter. The same is generally true of *scripserim* and *uenerim* as well.

These three perfect subjunctives subjoin to the text and embed within it the three narratological figures from above: Gellius the reader, Gellius the writer, and Gellius the character. This is another recursion, then. Author, narrator, and character are all three both inside and outside as well as before and after the *Noctes*.

49. See 3.18.

IX

De tabula picta in qua ancillulae et nani pictorque ipse et quidam alii homines descripti sunt.

It is not enough, then, to observe and to catalog the narratological niceties of the *Noctes*. Even though my own index of names of/for Gellius remains incomplete, I would like to proceed instead to the sequel. What relationship, then, does the complex set of Gellii have to the broader question of the status of knowledge itself in the *Noctes*? The issue here is not to describe the narratological phenomena but rather to motivate and to justify them. How do these Gellii make the *Noctes* a possible and a reasonable project rather than an impossible and an unreasonable one? I note that it is unlikely that an author today would pen a *Noctes* in anything other than an ironic gesture. That is, the *Noctes* is today possible only as a pointed impossibility. Conversely, how did these Gellii once upon a time delineate a space within which the items gathered could be arrayed? How did they guarantee the structure of the virtual (and actual) table of knowledge? The table here is to be taken in a variety of senses: both truth as tabular and tabulated and truth as a thing consumed and exchanged at the dinner table. The place of truth is thus both literal and metaphorical. How do these Gellii guarantee the rules whereby coherence is produced between what are for us disparate items? This question restates the preceding one.

“The painter is standing a little back from his canvas. He is glancing at his model; perhaps he is considering whether to add some finishing touch, though it is also possible that the first stroke has not yet been made.” So begins Foucault’s description of Velázquez’s painting *Las Meninas*.⁵⁰ Velázquez paints a painting about painting. Foucault writes about it. Gellius the narrator paints a painting about the art of scholarship. Gellius the author also writes about it. The preface to the *Noctes*—penned by both the author and the narrator, of course—provides a commentary on the *commentarii* as a collection of portraits of the art of words. Below we will explore the recursion and infinite regress produced by our own action as readers of the *Noctes*. For now, though, we will ponder the issues raised by Foucault’s virtual trip to El Museo del Prado.

Foucault describes a system of feints, a painter who has briefly appeared out from behind (the painting of) a canvas and who will return again to his invisibility anon. Analogously, Gellius writes Gellius reading. The face of Gellius peeks out at us as he turns his gaze away from the book he has been

50. Foucault 1973:3.

reading in order to contemplate the scene before his eyes. The problem here, though, is that the book he is reading is also the book he is writing; it is as well the book we are reading. And when he stares out to contemplate the scene before him, it is not so much “us” that he is looking at as a textual community he espies, a community that he will shortly pen into the further pages of his book-of-life, the *Noctes*.

Foucault describes a painter at the threshold of two incompatible visibilities: the canvas he paints and the canvas on which he is painted.⁵¹ Analogously, Gellius describes a reader reading at the threshold of two incompatible textualities: the text that he reads and the text on which he is read. However, if Gellius the author is the same figure as Gellius the reader, then the second clause of this last sentence can also be written as “the text that he writes and the text on which he is written.” The painter Velázquez paints a painting of a painter who turns out to be “Velázquez” painting. To see and to paint merge: the painted painter looks out and paints. In Gellius to read and to write merge: the read reader, the written reader, the written writer all look out and read/write.

If the painter’s eye both greets and dismisses us, so does Gellius’s eye. Gellius looks out at us reading but manifestly does not see “us.” We are dismissed if we do not mistake ourselves for the readers Gellius imagines reading him. Gellius imagines readers like himself reading him. Furthermore, on the analogy of Caesar’s *On Analogy*, readers read for the similar. They read for and gather authoritative likenesses. Or rather, readers read readings that gather authoritative likeness. Or rather, what are we to say about “rather” here? Reading and reading readings are not strictly analogous operations. Their distinction is distinct; the comparans is not exactly the comparand any more than painting is comparable to looking at a painting of painting. And yet the two actions subsist in a dynamic tension that reproduces the paradoxes of the painting of the handmaidens, a painting that pointedly confuses original acts and derivative ones. Moreover, this tension between reading and reading readings reproduces the paradoxical proposition that antiquarianism is not (just) the handmaiden of positive knowledge but is rather (also) the sovereign figure and *dictator perpetuus* that guarantees the space upon which the portrait of knowledge is represented.

Foucault describes (a) a painter’s sovereign gaze; (b) an invisible canvas; and (c) an invisible model. We ultimately deduce that the painter is gazing at the sovereign, the subject of the painting on the other side of the canvas

51. Foucault 1973:4.

that is concealed from us. The painter's gaze is sovereign in a derivative sense, then: this gaze has been authorized to sit with and to look upon authority. Gellius the good reader has written into the *Noctes* books that we cannot see. He only re-presents them to us. These books are invisible objects written onto the visible text: the writer sees his (re)writing of them, but we do not. These books are the invisible subjects at which the writer looks out as he writes. One of the chief such books/models is Caesar/Caesar's *De analogia*. Meanwhile, Gellius the written reader shares the space of the textual canvas with a variety of fellow readers. In fact, he is frequently looking at them rather than gazing out at us. And yet they, men like Fronto and Favorinus and Taurus, are themselves reading the *De analogia* rather than staring back at Gellius. Gellius the written reader watches these readers reading and arguing with one another in the vestibule of Caesar. The various handmaidens watch the infanta, the center of the picture, as she stares back at her invisible parents. Young Gellius and the various *adulescentes*—let us distinguish for a moment the written reader Gellius from his younger second self—join in the crowd of onlookers as Favorinus takes center stage and stares back at the invisible sire of his own authority. This is the authority of the necessarily invisible and necessarily absent authorities of the Roman past, the authority of Cato *et alii*.

Foucault describes a window (barely visible) that produces the light streaming in and making a field of visibility.⁵² We see the painter seeing us, but he is made visible by the same light via which he sees us. The visual field, impossible, heterogeneous, and incompatible as it may be, nevertheless has a unitary source of illumination. "Philology" illuminates the *Noctes* always and everywhere. And yet the white light of philology is in fact a composite of red, blue, and green, as it were, of authority, use, and logic. The elaborate play of light and shadow of the whole is a polychromatic canvas made possible by the variations in the component elements of the complex unity that is the light of learning. Nevertheless, it must be noted that one of these elements, "authority," is both a component of the light that enables representation and is also the thing represented. It is both an active and a passive principle of composition. It is everywhere seen and also the thing forever invisible just outside and "before" the canvas of the text.

Foucault describes a mirror at the far end of the room.⁵³ Nobody looks at the mirror. This mirror looks at nobody. Everyone looks at what is in front of themselves. The mirror looks exclusively at what is in front of the

52. Foucault 1973:6.

53. Foucault 1973:7.

figures in the foreground. The mirror does not duplicate, then; it adds. It adds the sovereign to the picture; it restores visibility to that which was outside of view.⁵⁴ Gellius paints a scene of reading/watching the authoritative past: Ennius, Cato, Caesar. “Behind” Gellius the writer we see, or at least we think we see, an image, a reflection of reality. This mirror set in the background allows for the recomposition from the pieces of the body of their writings an authoritative whole that emerges doubly on the other side of the canvas of the *Noctes*, both “before” it and “after” it. And this double quality is itself doubled: the before and the after are both spatial and chronological. Before the *Noctes*, the *De analogia*. After the *Noctes*, the *De analogia*. Of course, after the *Noctes* the *De analogia* is never quite the same again, and that is because what is revealed behind the figures in the text is a text-object that is variously and by turns small, fragmentary, invisible, and impossible.

“What is the spectacle?” The face reflected in the mirror is the face contemplating it. The figures are looking at a scene for which they are a scene.⁵⁵ The various observing functions converge in a point outside the canvas. This ideal point is also very real: it enables the picture as a whole.⁵⁶ The multiplicity of the reading function in Gellius converges and is coordinated in this invisible point. The author-reader, the character-reader, and the reader-reader all read/see from this imaginary standpoint whose knowledge-effects are all too real. The imagined-to-be-reading figure is, ideally, Caesar. The other three reader-functions act “on analogy” with that forever before/gone/imaginary reader. The fantasy of sovereign reading enables the various semiauthorized, provisional, and self-authorizing readings depicted in the *Noctes*. Reading is written into the text “in the light of” a specific sovereign readerly gaze. However, this gaze is not specifically dictatorial, not immanently commanding. Rather, it is “as if.” The absence of the sovereign is carefully staged within/before/after the text.⁵⁷ This makes possible similarity with difference; it empowers analogy; it allows for the positive grounding of a derivative scholarly authority that emerges specifically in the absence of real authority. Caesar is read; he is not “there.” Caesar is soon to be greeted; he has not yet arrived.

The nonpresence of Caesar in fact yields one of the key differences between Gellius’s work and that of Pliny the Elder: Pliny’s preface obsesses over the question of addressing knowledge specifically to Caesar, and the

54. Foucault 1973:8.

55. Foucault 1973:14.

56. Foucault 1973:15.

57. Compare Foucault 1973:16.

whole is shot through with the language of power as it relates to the power of language.⁵⁸ The *Noctes* lacks a strong equation of reader and Caesar. In fact, we are told that Gellius's children are the most likely readers and the proper proprietors of this paternal legacy. Caesar's position and function are conjured much more indirectly in the *Noctes*, and the process of constituting the elaborate scenery of the canvas and the virtual space beyond the canvas takes place by way of a series of ironic appeals to Caesar done by way of third parties and dramatic vignettes. The authorial voice never turns to face Caesar directly.

Even though I promised myself that I would keep my own eyes focused on the Gellii, let me bring to your attention one more figure. In Velázquez's painting there is a figure in the back. He is either entering or leaving the room. He is glancing over his shoulder. He is an irruption and an interruption. He offers, he imposes a competing sovereign and nonsovereign gaze, a glance.⁵⁹ This ambiguous and uncertain figure evokes another kind of reader of the *Noctes*. We could call him the cursory (re)reader of Gellius. This reader reads in a similar-but-not-the-same way as the reader-Gellius written into the text. This "you" is assumed by the text, and it is constrained by the preface and other phenomena such as the potential "you" of the comparison of Menander and Caecilius (2.23). However, this reader also escapes the full-on gaze of reader-writer Gellius as figured: he stands behind Gellius and reads over his shoulder. The narrator of the preface can hear the arrival of this figure who comes after/behind him: the chapter headings are inserted to help this wayward reader of Gellius's own wayward reading. This reader, "you," should you identify not with the sovereign and stable nonfigured figure but with the figured interruption, remains beholden to the same logic of optics and the same laws of authority, and the same practices of reading/writing. And yet, it is not exactly the same. This analogous figure, "you," if you will, supplements more dangerously than does the sovereign. What you add to the text by your gesture even if you turn away from it remains much more ambiguous, provided, of course, that there is such a thing as ambiguity.

58. See Murphy 2004 on the power-taxonomy dyad in Pliny. See especially Murphy 2004:205–6 for the preface to the *Natural History*.

59. Foucault 1973:11.

LIBER QVINTVS



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Tomus I. I

Libri Librorum

Auctoris Auctores

Lectio num Lectores

Appendix

Fragmenta

LIBER SEXTVS



Libri Librorum

I

Figuras habitusque uerborum noue aut insigniter dictorum in Gelliano illo carmine ruminabamur et, ut quaeque uox indidem digna animaduerti subuenerat, qua nos quoque possemus uti, memoriae mandabamus.

If the figure of the painter in Velázquez's *Las Meninas* helps us to appreciate the problem of Gellius as author and character, the *Noctes* itself is nevertheless not just like that one canvas. It also resembles a number of Magritte's (non)paintings: *La trahison des images* and *La condition humaine*, for example.¹ The preface insists that the book not only represents Gellius's own life, but that it captures it as well. The boundary between books and life is porous: to live is to read, and to read is to live. Books about books are also books about life, and the life that leaves books unexamined is not worth living. What, though, are the full ramifications of living one's life "by the book"?

One of the longer chapters of the *Noctes* as a whole concerns breast milk. This discussion begins with real bodies and ends with literary *corpora*. The twelfth book opens with Favorinus learning that the wife of one of his followers has given birth to a son. The company goes to visit the home of the new father to pay their respects. Favorinus starts asking questions about the labor itself. The delivery was difficult; the mother is worn out and resting. Favorinus then asks a question that is no question: "I have no doubt but that she is going to nourish her son with her own milk."² The mother of the woman who has just given birth responds that one should spare the girl; they will have recourse to wet nurses. This is the only dialogue with a woman in the *Noctes*, and it has just ended. Gellius

1. See Foucault 1983 and Gunderson 2003:90–114.

2. "nihil" inquit "dubito, quin filium lacte suo nutritura sit" (12.1.4).

quotes Favorinus's outburst in answer to the news, "I beg of you, woman, that you allow her to be wholly and entirely the mother to her own son."³ A long discourse on milk and maternity ensues.

Favorinus insists that maternity is a woman's natural role. Her body and its organs are so designed. He upbraids the new mother's mother as if she had perhaps bought into the theory that breasts and nipples might be beautiful rather than functional: "*an tu quoue,*" inquit, "*putas . . .*" (12.1.7). There is, of course, no hint in the mother's original reply that she had been thinking along these lines. Favorinus is not waiting for an answer. In fact, he takes both sides of a debate that he is spontaneously siring on this blessed occasion. He imagines retorts to his own points: "But it makes no difference,"—people say this,—"provided the child is nourished and lives, by whose milk this is achieved."⁴ Favorinus then makes an argument from analogy: as is the mother, so her milk, and so the child.⁵ Therefore, shady women should not be suckling the babes of the elite. In fact, this very practice reveals how it is that the children of good parents can turn out bad (12.1.19). He supports his argument with authoritative citations: Homer and Vergil are trotted out (12.1.20).

Favorinus the Greek-speaking Gaul cites a supplement to Homer by "our Vergil": the sentiment of *Iliad* 16.33–35 is reproduced and augmented by *Aeneid* 4.367. One actually needs to know *Aeneid* 4.366 by heart in order to appreciate the connection between the two passages.⁶ The Vergil Favorinus cites is, then, "And Hyrcanian tigers gave you their breasts." Favorinus glosses this snippet of the *Aeneid* according to the logic of nursing he has already given. And he then returns to his arguments about the biology of nursing and its relationship to the psychological connection between mother and child. His discourse ends not too much later (12.1.23).

The theory of nursing affects the implicit theory of citation and translation that we find in this moment of Favorinus's argument. Vergil the reader of Homer has thoroughly digested the *Iliad* and converted it into the raw material for a variety of his own verses. As the nursling of the Greek poet, this Roman author has himself become great, great enough, even, to add a line about nursing to his prestigious original and to be praised for it.

Is, then, Homer Vergil's mother or his wet nurse? The answer to the

3. "*oro te,*" inquit "*mulier, sine eam totam integram matrem esse filii sui*" (12.1.5).

4. "*Sed nihil interest,*"—*hoc enim dicitur*—"*dum alatur et uiuat, cuius id lacte fiat*" (12.1.10).

5. Compare the milk metaphor for early education in Ausonius. See Atherton 1998:227–28, where both Ausonius and this passage of Gellius are discussed.

6. Rolfe 1927 thus translates both *Aeneid* 4.366 and 4.367 here even though only the latter line is present in Gellius.

question matters: proper family ties are at stake. Given that Vergil is so true to his model, one is inclined to answer that Homer must be a “biological mother” here. But this itself gives rise to an interesting metaphorical consequence: children produce their own natural mothers. That is, it is Vergil the reader who has turned himself into Homer’s well-fed son. Superlative reading naturalizes the bond between a text and its reader/rewriter. Instead of suppositious children, we have suppositions parents. And yet there is nothing “suppositious” about the representation of this gesture: this is a legitimate reading and a reading that produces legitimacy.⁷ The verses themselves are all about nonparentage, about deducing illegitimacy from character despite the purported parentage of Achilles and Aeneas. Vergil becomes Homer’s legitimate child by appropriating to himself verses about illegitimacy. We can deduce Vergil’s legitimacy from the character of the *Aeneid*. In fact, given the impacted staging of this passage, we can rewrite the preceding sentence as follows: “We can deduce Vergil’s legitimacy from the character of (our own reading of [Gellius’s reading of (Favorinus’s reading of)]) the *Aeneid*.”

Gellius appropriates to himself the arguments of Favorinus the appropriator. In fact, much as Vergil translated Homer into Latin from Greek, so too has Gellius translated. As the chapter closes, Gellius informs us that Favorinus originally delivered this address in Greek (12.1.24). Gellius has also adapted and modified.⁸ The original context of the discussion has been placed in a new context: what was once a harangue addressed to a wife and mother by a Gaulish sophist is now food for thought for the readers of Gellius’s miscellany. Gellius explains his motivation: he did it *communis utilitatis gratia*, “for the sake of the common utility” (12.1.24). “Use” here, though, is as complex an issue as it is throughout the *Noctes*. The advice has a direct and immediate use, namely, as a weapon in the fight over the ideology of motherhood. And this first use swiftly seeps into a related but more diffuse one: all parents should ruminate on these words. But the “common use” of an antiquarian also consists of digestion and rumination in and of themselves. The action itself matters more than the specific contents to which the action is applied. The birth of a child gives birth to nothing so much as antiquarian reflections. Another chance occurrence will doubtless spawn other antiquarian moments.

7. “Naturally,” I will be accused of foisting this interpretation on the passage and reading illegitimately.

8. Literary critical terms such as *imitari*, *aemulari*, and even less specific terminology such as *(con)uertere*, *sequi*, and *interpretari* accordingly all have metacritical play as well. For the list, see Vardi 1996:505.

Though Vergil clearly is both the child and the rival of Homer, and though this passage of the *Aeneid* might be categorized as an example of *aemulatio*, Gellius is distinctly cagey about his own oedipal rivalry with Favorinus. Gellius insists that he has only captured the ideas of Favorinus, the *sententiae*: the beauty of the original has been lost. In fact, Gellius says that the *copias* and the *ubertates uerborum* have disappeared in the translation. Strikingly, then, the “milkiness” of the Greek original has disappeared: Gellius all but describes Favorinus’s prose style as having a *lactea ubertas*.⁹ *Ubertas* as used regarding Favorinus’s style clearly recalls *ubera*, “(lactating) breasts.” *Ubena* appears three times in the chapter: 12.1.7, 12.1.13, and 12.1.20. The last is in the Vergil quote. But no sooner does Gellius evoke the image of Favorinus’s own milkiness than he declares that all this richness has been lost in the translation. Only the idea of richness remains, not richness itself. Gellius is thus not quite Vergil to Favorinus: (un)like Homer, Favorinus is inimitable.

Yet antiquarianism thrives on the ideas of things as opposed to the things themselves. This ghostly afterimage of vanished lactation is in fact the very sort of fodder upon which the deathless-because-undead life of the mind can feed. If Vergil supplemented Homer, then the supplement that Gellius provides is not a new verse but instead the notion of archiving as another species of nourishing oneself. Even as the milk gets lost in the very act of its preservation, archiving nevertheless also allows a child to sire his own legitimate parents. And the archive is a *penus* from whose provender Gellius’s legitimate children can themselves be fed.

II

Quid significet proprie “legere”; et in quae diuerticula significatio istius uocabuli flexa sit. et uerba Auli Gellii ex Noctibus eius super ea re sumpta.

The distinction between books and life blurs. We have already encountered this phenomenon on several occasions. We should review those passages once more and add to their number. The net result, when seen from the perspective of books and not of life, is a portrait of a world where texts inhabit and haunt conversation. Gellius can bicker with Asinius Pollio about the works of Sallust as if the two were seated at the same table (10.26). All

9. The phrase is (in)famously used of Livy’s style. See Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.1.32. Ironically, the next chapter of the *Noctes* concerns the baleful style of Seneca: Gellius drinks deeply from Quintilian and others so as to deliver the verdict that Seneca is bad milk upon which to rear a child. See also Henry 1994:1394 on the eloquence-maternity link in this chapter of the *Noctes*.

of this sympotic or pseudo-sympotic banter aspires to—where it does not arise specifically from—the condition of the already-said and the already-written. Accordingly, the notion that the encounters in Gellius might be bogus only half captures this issue. The ideal encounter is so erudite that it is not so much “too good to be true” as it is “so learned as to be truly bookish.” And here truly bookish implies either that it comes straight from books or that it is destined for a book—the *Noctes* specifically—or perhaps even both.

We saw above that Fronto and his interlocutor were having exactly the same conversation about *harena* as had the speakers in Caesar’s *De analogia* (19.8). The dialogue Caesar wrote is the dialogue Fronto had is the dialogue Gellius wrote. Although it is possible to reduce the situation to something like plagiarism where Gellius is cribbing from Caesar, such a label clearly does not quite fit even if the scene with Fronto is invented. Adaptation would perhaps work as a label. But even this designation fails to capture the spirit of the thing. The point here and elsewhere is that one’s very life should be lifted from books. One today praises a book for its fidelity to life. The *Noctes* is a book about lives that were faithful to books.

In both 1.2 and 19.1 we find two discussions that turn into readings of Epictetus. But the Epictetus one reads turns out to be specifically addressing the very scene in which he is read. The book glosses the life, the life the book. The first of these chapters is very much programmatic. Not only is 1.2 a very early moment in the *Noctes Atticae*; it is also set in Athens, albeit on a hot summer’s day rather than during some febrile night. A brash young man who talks out of turn and is vain in his Stoic pretensions gets put in his place by Herodes Atticus.¹⁰ The youth declares that everyone is an idiot compared to himself. Atticus commands that a book be brought forth (*proferri*, 1.2.6) to answer him since nobody present could possibly do so. The first book of Arrian’s digest(ion) of Epictetus is produced. In it youths who are vain in their Stoic pretensions are put in their place by Epictetus. The passage quoted is itself a dialogue, a back-and-forth in which someone’s book learning is challenged. Epictetus’s discussion of good and evil explicitly brings into question the value of knowing such things by way of authorities, from Diogenes, Chrysippus, or Cleanthes, as opposed to having oneself put them to the test and made a rule of them for oneself (βεβασάνικας οὖν <τι> αὐτῶν καὶ δόγμα σουτοῦ πεποιήσαι).¹¹ One will need the wisdom itself and not the maxims about wisdom in a

10. See Anderson 1993:11–12 on the rich sociology of this scene. It is taken as an emblematic moment, and it opens Anderson’s own exploration of the Second Sophistic.

11. 1.2.10.

life-and-death situation. The crisis imagined is a fierce storm at sea.¹² The chapter and the scene itself close as the young man at Herodes' house falls silent. He does so "as if all these things were said not by Epictetus against certain others, but by Herodes against himself."¹³

The youth reads the situation of the reading: the reading was an attack on himself. The choice of citation was a pointed one. Epictetus was being read, but Herodes was speaking. This was an out-and-out slap in the face. This is a good interpretation, but it is also another mistake on the part of the brash young man. What he needs to realize is that when Herodes speaks, Epictetus is being read even if you cannot see the book in his hands. That is, the discourse of the learned is always inhabited in advance by their learning. This message itself potentially cuts against the meaning of the Epictetus passage that is cited. The passage implies that you will need to be ready to actually behave in a certain manner when the time comes, not merely to know the books and arguments concerning that behavior. However, the test that faces the characters in the *Noctes* is always one of performing erudition: as a good guest, as a learned friend, as an actual competitor in an academic dispute, all these roles require that one behave bookishly. This means, of course, that one knows the books and arguments concerning the crisis at hand. And this also means knowing the books and arguments concerning books and arguments so that (Arrian's book on) Epictetus on books can be brought out at just the right moment.

In 1.2 we read about a reading of Epictetus where a storm at sea is an example crisis. In 19.1 we read about a crisis: Gellius was sailing; there was a storm at sea. A philosopher with difficulty weathers this storm and then discusses his behavior with Gellius by citing Epictetus. The man has not only lived the book; he can cite it chapter and verse.

Before Gellius can have his learned exchange with the philosopher, though, another passenger, a rich Greek from Asia, teases the sage for his fear during the storm. The philosopher replies sharply that this critic does not deserve an answer. But he does say that Aristippus was once asked the same question in a similar circumstance by a similar man. Aristippus will answer this fellow for him.¹⁴ The anecdote quoted is an unkind one.

12. The text breaks off ironically—given what we have seen elsewhere in the *Noctes*—just after it is asked what you will do if Caesar sends for you to answer an accusation.

13. *His ille auditis insolentissimus adulescens obticuit, tamquam si ea omnia non ab Epicteto in quosdam alios, sed ab Herode in eum ipsum dicta essent* (1.2.13).

14. *Set tibi sane Aristippus ille * * discipulus, pro me responderit, qui cum in simili tempore a simillimo tui homine <esset> interrogatus, quare philosophus timeret, . . .* (19.1.10). Compare and contrast Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 57: a tumultuous journey provokes internal reflections and an eventual epistle declaring that *mutatio coloris* is not a *perturbatio*

The rich Greek is gotten rid of by this citation much as was the youth in 1.2. The fact of the eternal recurrence of the same allows the man of books to answer his critics by merely reiterating the same answer as was given last time the same situation arose and was written out. Those who can cite well are able to live well. They are also able to write out a transcript of their well-lived/cited life. This transcript will be of use to future generations of citers/livers provided they wisely choose the breasts from which to feed themselves.

After the rich Greek is dismissed, Gellius later approaches the philosopher and also asks him about the storm and his fear. He receives a very different response to what is effectively the same question.

Atque ille mihi placide et comiter “quoniam” inquit “audiendi cupidus es, audi, quid super isto breui quidem, sed necessario et naturali pauore maiores nostri, conditores sectae Stoicae, senserint, uel potius” inquit “lege; nam et facilius credideris, si legas, et memineris magis.” Atque ibi coram ex sarcinula sua librum protulit Epicteti philosophi quantum διαλέξεων, quas ab Arriano digestas congruere scriptis Ζήνωνος et Chrysippi non dubium est.

He answered me calmly and affably: “Since you desire to listen, listen to what our forefathers, the founders of the Stoic sect, believed about this brief albeit necessary and natural fear. Or rather, read. For you will both believe it the more easily and remember it the better if you read it.” And then and there as I looked on, he pulled out of his sack the fifth book of the *Discourses* of Epictetus, which as arranged (*digestas*) by Arrian assuredly agree with the writings of Zeno and Chrysippus.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 19.1.13–14

If it is possible to answer for one’s life by citing from a book, it is also possible to converse with someone by handing him a book. The philosopher’s gesture converges with Gellius’s own predilections: instead of a conversation we have a reading. The talk becomes a book. The imperative “Hear . . .” is corrected to “Or rather, read . . .” The face-to-face conversation in 19.1 begins much as did the reported conversation inside Epictetus’s

animi. See also the scenography of Seneca’s *Consolatio ad Marciam*: Seneca tells Marcia that Areus told Livia that a storm at sea, not smooth sailing, tests our spirit. Seneca says that Marcia should imagine that Areus’s discourse was “hers”: *tuum illic, Marcia, negotium actum, tibi Areus adsedit; muta personam—te consolatus est* (Seneca, *Consolatio ad Marciam* 6.1).

book in 1.2.8: Εἰπέ μοι . . . Ἄκουε. . . . But a new verb is added to the list that displaces the other ones even as it augments them: “Read . . .” supplements, but dangerously. Epictetus questioned reading: “Πόθεν οἶδας;” was not appropriately answered by a form of λέγειν. But reading as a source of knowledge did in fact matter in 1.2, and it matters even more here in 19.1.

Epictetus as rearranged and digested by Arrian to converge with Stoic doctrine becomes philosophy as rearranged and digested by Gellius to converge with the bookish life of the philologist. There is no particular reason given for why something read should be more memorable than something heard, but this too fits well with the logic of the *Noctes*: discourses become textual scenes throughout. Gellius’s book of memories is a remembrance of books read as well as a remembrance of talks about books. But the talk about books at times differs little from the books about which one talks. Similarly, the book that Gellius writes converges with the talkative books and bookish talking that he has read/heard.

Gellius continues this chapter by telling us what he read. Gellius translates it for us into Latin while preserving a few of the technical terms in Greek. The passage describes the manner in which mental visions, φαντασίαι, or fantasies, suddenly and involuntarily impinge upon the mind (19.1.15). At first, then, one is startled. Next, though, the foolish man confirms and assents to his fantasies. But the wise man does not assent to them: he scorns and rejects them.¹⁵ My summary picks up on the vivid Latin verbs. But the Greek terms are significant: συγκατατίθεσθαι and προσεπιδοξάζειν both have valences that affect the phantasmatic world of textual archives.

Συγκατατίθεσθαι means “to put down together with.” The concrete use is relatively rare. For example, a mother and a father both set their daughter in a tomb. An epigram is put upon the σῆμα that signs the τάφος.¹⁶ The metaphorical sense of the verb is more common. When metaphorical, though, a specific concrete action is the primary referent. The image is of putting down the same voting stone at the same time as another. That implies agreeing with another person. The “assent” of the Stoics, then, is a quasi-legislative act: you cast the same vote in favor of a proposition as does another.

15. *Mox tamen ille sapiens ibidem τὰς τοιαύτας φαντασίας, id est uisa istaec animi sui terrifica, non adprobat, hoc est συγκατατίθεται οὐδὲ προσεπιδοξάζει, sed abicit respuitque, nec ei metuendum esse in his quicquam uidetur* (19.1.18).

16. *Anthologiae Graecae appendix* 664. See Goldhill 1994 for φαντασίαι, signification, and epitaphs as they relate to visual culture and ecphrastic narrative.

The ghostly image of the other voter interests me. It haunts as well *προσ-επιδοξάζειν*. The verb is rare, but it is composed of common parts. The *προσ-* adds itself to *ἐπιδοξάζειν*. The latter verb means to form an opinion “on” something: to form a *δόξα* and to form it *ἐπί* something. The *προσ-* added to the verb means to do this “in addition.” The resulting image, then, closely resembles the joint voting above. “Assent” implies voting together with and forming the same opinion about a topic as does some other person.

But who is the other person? The philosophical passages being cited do not discuss this. However, third parties are implicitly present throughout the philological scenes in which these philosophical texts are embedded. It is possible to describe philosophical assent as a species of belated and retroactive reading. It is a kind of rereading that puts down a voting stone of agreement in the same urn as did Chrysippus. It is adding one’s own opinion to the same opinion held by Zeno. We may be able to imagine here yet another example of the anachronistic synchrony of antiquarianism. One is voting along with Chrysippus *et alii*, during an eternal session of the assembly of the wise.

This summary would probably strike contemporary scholars of Stoicism as forced if not “wrong.”¹⁷ But in the scenes of wisdom written out for us in the *Noctes* and in the use of reading and writing within these scenes, we discover that this sense of rereading is vital to the flow of the passages. Opinions are not set down in books like so many tombs; instead the signs written on books are opinions to which one can add one’s own (identical) opinion. A book is also an urn into which one can cast the same voting stone as did the author. An opinion is thus both one’s own and not one’s own. My opinion is also not mine.

This proposition allows for a vindication of Herodes’ use of a book of Epictetus that would seem to argue against that very same use of it. Epictetus critiques the role of the authority of authors and books. What counts is to forge a decree about a thing for oneself (*δόγμα σαντοῦ πεποιήσαι*; 1.2.10). This implies turning a *δόξα* into a legally valid proposition, a public decree with purely internal effects.¹⁸ The antiquarian reader who authors his own philological life does this by means of casting an identical verdict to the ones found in his sources. Books are the repositories of the already-decreed. Readers make these decrees their own. In fact, for the antiquarian

17. Inwood 2005:19 and 45–46 can be consulted by those interested in orthodox treatments of these terms and issues.

18. In the phrase *βεβασάνικας οὖν <τι> αὐτῶν καὶ δόγμα σαντοῦ πεποιήσαι*, the participle *βεβασάνικας* is also legalistic: it evokes inquiry of a witness under torture.

there is an always-already quality to this whole process: “that I have read,” *legerim*, implies that I have made this my own, ἐμαυτὸν πεποίησαι. The antiquarian is, then, always already “well read” and always already the possessor of a *penus* of erudition. This “already” governs the way he continues to reading. We only ever see the ongoing process, not its inception.

Gellius closes 19.1 as follows:

Haec Epictetum philosophum ex decretis Stoicorum sensisse atque dixisse in eo, quo dixi, libro legimus adnotandaque esse idcirco existimaui, ut rebus forte id genus, quibus dixi, obortis pauescere sensim et quasi albescere non insipientis esse hominis neque ignaui putemus et in eo tamen breui motu naturali magis infirmitati cedamus, quam quod esse ea, qualia uisa sunt, censeamus.

I read that in accordance with the decrees of the Stoics the philosopher Epictetus thought and said these things in that book which I mentioned. I figured that they should be noted for this reason: when circumstances like the aforementioned ones should happen to arise, we ought to believe that to grow slowly pale and to turn almost white is not the mark of a foolish man or of a coward. In that brief and natural movement it is more that we yield to human weakness than it is the case that we believe that things are as they seem.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 19.1.21

The philosopher is not the only one who needs these sage words. The philologist needs them too. In fact, the philologist needs them doubly: the words are useful as ideas and as an authoritative citation. Gellius records Epictetus recording the decrees of the Stoics. Gellius reads and annotates. When need arises, when *usus uenit*, we will not yield to the fantasy of the way things appear. Instead, we will be able to go back into the archive of our memory and to find in there the proper verdict to deliver concerning the face of things that confront us. By invoking yet again *usus uenit*, I of course mean to imply that the needs that will arise are the crises that only a bibliophile faces. Is this word legitimate? Is that citation correct? The fear of not knowing is all-pervasive. An image of a word comes before the mind, a φαντασία of a σῆμα arrives. One starts: Do I know this? What am I to say? One (re)reads the image. One goes back into one’s memory-as-library.¹⁹ One casts a simultaneous vote and/or adds one’s opinion to the issue. The

19. See world-as-book(ish) for Apuleius in Sandy 1997:88.

life of the mind is lived retroactively and belatedly.²⁰ As a performance, philological existence is citational.²¹ The scholar's verdicts are always supplementary, added again to a thing to which opinions have already been added.²² The imagined library and its vault of verdicts spares us the horror of a failed encounter with a strange and unexpected word in the here and now. The object found is always in fact an object refound.²³

<IIb>

<*****>

Gellius does on one occasion sound a note of vague disappointment when he realizes that an encounter had in fact arisen out of a prewritten script. In 18.5 Antonius Julianus and his young friends go to hear a man publicly read Ennius. Actually, they are motivated by a desire to hear him misread Ennius. They are not disappointed: the man bumbles a word in a line and thereby allows Julianus to show off to the kids at the performer's expense. A discussion of *ecus* ensues. Julianus even talks about the trouble he took to rent (!) an old text of Ennius for the sake of looking at a single line to verify that *eques* and not *ecus* was written in that verse. The chapter closes by noting the erudition and affability of Julianus's discourse (18.5.12). The very last sentence, though, reads, "But I subsequently lighted upon these very same things written in widely known handbooks" (*Hoc tum nobis Iulianus et multa alia erudite simul et adfabiliter dixit. Sed eadem ipsa post etiam in peruulgatis commentariis scripta offendimus*; 18.5.12). "The same things subsequently": we need to unpack the many valences of this phrase within the world of antiquarian knowledge.

Gellius experiences an unwelcome metaphorical encounter (*offendimus*): in a "thoroughly vulgar" book he meets up with the conversation he had already had. Formerly he thought he had met up with Julianus, but in fact he had been in the company of the all too well known. The disappointment stems less from the repetition itself than from whence the knowledge was repeated. Gellius had hoped that Julianus's bookish collection of readings was representative of the famous Julianus himself, not just some everyday handbooks. Julianus's citations should represent his own reading, not

20. Compare Porter 2005a and the various mechanisms of classicism. See also Whitmarsh 2001:44 on the sense of belatedness as the beginning of finding one's own place.

21. Compare Butler 1993:12 and 14. See also Gunderson 2000:113–15. We are all philologists, then, even and especially as gendered subjects.

22. Compare Martindale 1993:37.

23. See Lacan 1994:53. Lacan's whole enterprise, of course, bills itself as the refinding of Freud.

commonplace and vulgar reading. Recall that “His Reading,” *lectionis suae*, was a nontitle of the *Noctes* itself (pr. 6). “His reading” should always be “His Own Reading” (*suae*), and more specifically, it should be “His Own Ancient Readings” (*antiquarum lectionum*, pr. 6). Even if life implies a life of reading and citing, the preface to the *Noctes* makes it clear that already-known and excessively disseminated items are likely to meet with scorn (*inuolgata, aspernentur*, pr. 14). Julianus’s originality is not the issue here, but his “vulgarity” is. Of course, it is now also the case that Gellius’s own *commentarii* contain this same commonplace message all over again. But now this knowledge also contains a commentary on the commentaries and a portrait of Julianus. And so we ourselves meet up with the story of *eques* in Ennius in a manner that is the same but different: *eadem ipsa post*.

The specter of Gellius haunts us to this day. Naturally, there are disputes with Gellius and condemnations of him. But the impassive stoicism of contemporary scholarship nevertheless dedicates itself to the endless transformation of the fantasy of the library into a positive dogma. This doctrine seeks to turn words into things, into positive facts about “what Ennius said” and the raw *realia* from which subsequent interpretations of the archaic age, interpretations untainted by the Antonine Gellius, may emerge. In short, we are not much interested in ghost stories, undead feasts, or impossible synchronies. *Eadem ipsa post*: the modern after-the-fact reading of the *Noctes* reconfigures the meaning not just of individual chapters but also of the *Noctes* as a whole. It was vulgar. Let it be shredded and rewritten as precious: *My Own Ancient Readings, lectionum antiquarum mearum*.

This after-the-fact reading of Gellius turns out to be the very same reading as Gellius himself offers. Gellius’s nostalgia and longing for the lost word abides. The modern reader’s nostalgia happily sacrifices Gellius himself in the quest for the old in Gellius. But this is a thoroughly Gellian move. The murder of Gellius only entails his ghostly return.²⁴

24. Compare Porter 2005a and “mediated classicism.” There is a metaphorical parallel with a difference in Lucian. See Zeitlin 2001:243–45 for the community assembled in Lucian’s *Isles of the Blessed*: “[T]he general congerie reflects the thought world of the Second Sophistic as if in microcosm.” She notes that this is a specifically ghostly community in Lucian. Unmediated appeal to the ghosts of primary authors and culture heroes, however, allows one to “correct” received scholarly opinions about the classics and to carve out a new space for oneself. See also Zeitlin 2001:256–60 on the immediacy of the ghostly encounter with Protesilaus in Philostratus’s *Heroicus*. This too produces emendations that are better described as novel interventions into the literary tradition.

III

Syllogismorum captionumque dialecticarum laqueis strepo κυριεύοντας et ἡσυχάζοντας et σωρείτας aliosque id genus griphos neminem posse dicens nisi me dissoluere.

To continue with the paradoxical philosophy of the *Noctes* and its oblique Stoic legacy, let us ask the riddle of the sorites. How many grains of knowledge constitute a heap? We can work the paradox either by addition or subtraction: what, if subtracted, converts the pile into a scattered mass? What, if added, would convert the disparate scatter into a heap? That is, if the *Noctes* does count as knowledge, what constitutes its surplus? If the *Noctes* does not count as knowledge, what is its deficit? The paradox of the *Noctes* perhaps adds as well the paradox of the horns to that of the heap.²⁵ And it also recalls the captious “What I am, you are not that. I am, though, a human. Therefore, you are not human.”²⁶

To begin: the illogical logic of the Gellian archive and its many lemmata confronts the reader with the fabled horns of a dilemma. If the *Noctes* is too little, then what application of τὸ προσεπιδοξάζειν on our part would make it enough? If the *Noctes* is too much, what grains of knowledge, what wheat must be winnowed from this chaff in order that we might ourselves accumulate an erudite tome? Meanwhile, on the erasure of Gellius: we have not lost him; therefore we still have him. That is, we declare his knowledge to be a bastard monstrosity, and his text a labyrinth in which a minotaur lurks. We wend our way through his text seeking to slay him. We follow a hermeneutical thread. And yet after the fact we discover that our own non-horns that we have not lost remain with us. That is, the monster we seek to slay turns out to be, paradoxically, our own double. “What I am, you are not that.” I am, though, a scholar. Therefore, Gellius, you are not a scholar. The argument turns on itself: “I, Gellius, am, though, a scholar . . .” The preceding is the negative portrait: *Noctes* as labyrinth; Gellius as minotaur. A positive version is equally possible: *Noctes* as hall of mirrors, as fun house; Gellius as Daedalus the elaborate artificer.²⁷ On this reading you would

25. “What you have not lost, you still have. You have not lost horns. Hence you still have horns.”

26. 18.3.8 as discussed earlier.

27. Jacob 2000:85 on Athenaeus: “Reading the *Deipnosophistae* is comparable to entering a world of mirrors and illusions. The text relates a series of banquets and is an encyclopaedia on the subject of banquets. It belongs to the genre of sympotic literature and it is a critical discussion of that genre.” Next, a dreadful thought: the *Noctes Atticae* akin to Catullus 64. See Theodorakopoulos 2000, where Catullus the artificer erases Daedalus in the name of an anti-teleological narrative.

find reflected in it not a slaughter of reason but a gay and clever feast, not a not-man but instead a man just like ourselves, a scholar.

When Gellius himself is given a treasure house of knowledge and invited to use it to adorn his own *Noctes*, he runs off to read it, and we read him reading a book that is both included in his text and exiled from it. The various species of its contents are reduced to a commentary on a genus of erudition that will not be admitted into Gellius's *commentarii*.

Homo nobis familiaris, in litterarum cultu non ignobilis magnamque aetatis partem in libris uersatus, "adiutum" inquit "ornatumque uolo ire noctes tuas" et simul dat mihi librum grandi uolumine doctrinae omnigenus, ut ipse dicebat, praescatentem, quem sibi elaboratum esse ait ex multis et uariis et remotis lectionibus, ut ex eo sumerem, quantum liberet rerum memoria dignarum. Accipio cupidus et libens, tamquam si Copiae cornum nactus essem, et recondo me penitus, ut sine arbitris legam.

I have a friend who is nothing to sniff at when it comes to literary cultivation, and he has spent a significant portion of his life reading. He said, "I want to go help adorn your *Noctes*." Thereupon, he gives me a book: a massive tome utterly teeming—that's how he put it—with every sort of learning. He says that it was the product of the sweat of his brow: it was compiled from readings that were many, varied, obscure. He gave it to me so that I could take from it as many noteworthy items as I should please. I take it eagerly, gladly: I feel as if I had gotten my hands on the Horn of Plenty. I hide myself away so that I can read it without anyone looking on.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 14.6.1–2

The passage is vivid and playful: the tenses play with past and present, and we see a scene as if it were unfolding before our eyes. We read a scene of reading, of reading readings even. One man invites another man to take his book and to subsume it into his own. Not all such appropriations are invited. But this is an affable gesture, at least on the face of it: the friend wants to be helpful. It becomes clear in the end, though, that the book that Gellius was invited to swallow might well swallow his own book. And this could also have been the meaning behind the "affable" gesture of giving it to Gellius: "Look at how paltry your *Nights* are next to my *Varied Readings*."²⁸ Or to use the metaphor of the passage, Gellius risks drowning

28. See Sandy 1997:80–81 on this passage. It is more than possible that the bad book is actually our good friend Favorinus's Παντοδαπή Ἱστορία. Sandy is following Barigazzi 1966:216, who is much more certain that this passage is about that book; in addition to

in the wash of this overflowing deluge of knowledge. The friend's book is outlandishly recondite, and it is read accordingly: *recondo me penitus*. Rare words and constructions are used to describe the rarified book: *praescatere* is a *hapax*, but it is probably playfully over the top rather than antique. A form of *scatere* is used with the genitive: you don't see that every day.²⁹ Similarly, we see the indeclinable adjective *omnigenus*: another rarity, compare Varro and Apuleius's *Florida*, both "recondite" texts in their own right.

With the phrase Horn of Plenty we suddenly realize that we are indeed once again viewing one of the rival books from the preface, a book not written and yet nevertheless also written in/by the *Noctes*. In fact, if this one book evokes both the Παντοδαπή Ἱστορία and the Ἀμαλθείας κέρας, then it is truly overflowing with knowledge: despite its singularity it doubly evokes the preface. The former title we can only appreciate belatedly, after thinking through the contents and comparing them with our knowledge of Favorinus's Παντοδαπή Ἱστορία. The latter quasi-but-not-quite title wanes as we ruminate. But both nevertheless remain affixed to this individual book of books that gets embedded in Gellius's book.

The friend's book is filled with "pure marvels," *mera miracula*.³⁰ Gellius can take whatever he pleases, and yet it is not clear that he takes anything at all from it other than a general lesson about reading. It is a lesson he communicates to us. Even as he hides himself away from onlookers to read this book, he invites us to watch and to judge his reading. The *arbiter* is an eyewitness and/or a judge. Arbiters have been both dismissed and summoned. We watch, and we add our opinion to the book and cast a similar verdict as does Gellius: think προσεπιδόξάζειν and συγκατατίθεσθαι once again. But we perform these acts not just relative to the book Gellius reads but also about Gellius and the book we are reading him write, that is, the *Noctes* itself.

The friend's book ultimately does, then, adorn and assist the *Noctes*, but it does so in a manner unintended by its author. Gellius pointedly offers a sample table of contents while refusing to capitulate to offering anything beyond the *capitula*.

providing sound *rationes*, Barigazzi musters an impressive bibliography filled with authorities to help him make his point. Beall 2001:101–4 addresses the potential paradox of a criticism of Gellius's hero Favorinus: we need to dismiss our vision of a stodgy Gellius and replace it with a more playful and ironic and rhetorical portrait.

29. Gellius himself likes the verb, and it seems to lead a relatively active life as a metaphor in the Latin of this period relative to its rarity and generally more literal use earlier.

30. *Miracula* is itself a word of blame in the *Noctes*. See Marache 1967:xxv.

Atque ibi scripta erant, pro Iuppiter, mera miracula: quo nomine fuerit, qui primus “grammaticus” appellatus est; et quot fuerint Pythagorae nobiles, quot Hippocratae; et cuiusmodi fuisse Homerus dicat in Vlixis domo λαύρη; et quam ob causam Telemachus cubans iunctim sibi cubantem Pisistratum non manu adtigerit, sed pedis ictu excitarit; et Eurycleia Telemachum quo genere claustrum incluserit; et quapropter idem poeta rosam non norit, oleum ex rosa norit.

And there one found written, god help me, pure marvels: What was the name of the man who was first called “grammarian”? How many men named Pythagoras were illustrious? How many named Hippocrates? Of what sort was the λαύρη, or “passage,” that Homer talks about in the house of Ulysses? What was the reason behind the fact that as the two lay resting Telemachus did not touch Pisistratus with his hand, but instead roused him with a kick of his foot? What sort of bar did Eurycleia used to shut in Telemachus? How is it that that same poet did not know the rose, but he knew of rose oil?

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 14.6.3

The list goes on and on, and we will set aside its remaining entries. But the kind of things that the friend has placed in his book is clear enough from this sample: the volume is overflowing with utterly obscure “facts.”³¹ Of course, obscurity, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Gellius himself might to many seem tediously crammed with the unfamiliar for its own sake. And of course, it is easy to suspect that Gellius believes in the beauty of obscurity, and that hence this book would thereby have the cast of the most sublime work imaginable. And yet the book that adorns the *Nights* does so more as a trophy set up designating a conquest rather than as a grove wherein Gellius gathered little flowers that he then set upon his own brow.

The drama resumes and is played out to its Socratic/Homeric conclusion:

Quem cum statim properans redderem, “ὄναιό σου,” inquam “doctissime uirosum, ταύτης τῆς πολυμαθίας et librum hunc opulentissimum recipe nil prosus ad nostras paupertinas litteras congruentem. Nam meae Noctes, quas instructum ornatumque isti, de uno maxime illo uersu Homeri quaerunt, quem Socrates prae omnibus semper rebus sibi esse cordi dicebat:

ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακὸν τ’ ἀγαθὸν <τε> τέτυκται.”

31. Similar complaints about books with similar contents can be found at Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 88.37. See Sandy 1997:77.

Hastening to return the book at once, I said “Bless you, most learned of men, for this display of manifold erudition. Take back this luxuriant book that has nothing to do with my impoverished letters. My *Noctes*, which you came to fit out and to adorn, proceeds fundamentally from that one verse of Homer that Socrates used to say took precedence in his heart over all other things:

Whatever good and ill has come to you at home.”

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 14.6.5

The refusal of learning is highly learned. Gellius’s praise of his *familiaris* simultaneously condemns him: there is little need to arbitrate the issue, merely to look on as it happens. The word πολυμαθία is the dead giveaway. As if the repetition of the *Noctes* and the *Horn of Plenty* did not already recall the preface, this noun insists that we return to it: *Ego uero, cum illud Ephesii uiri summe nobilis uerbum cordi haberem, quod profecto ita est: πολυμαθίη νόον οὐ διδάσκει, . . .* “For my part I keep close to my breast that maxim of the most utterly noble man of Ephesus that goes precisely thus: ‘Vast learning teaches not the mind’” (pr. 12). Gellius holds dear to his heart a maxim of Heraclitus against πολυμαθία. Socrates holds dear to his heart a verse of Homer. The luxurious and promiscuous dissemination of knowledge in this bad book is a centrifugal movement that precisely counters the various centripetal imperatives of the *Noctes*: the domestic *penus*, self-improvement, the legacy for the children.

The many senses of Gellius’s studied beginning should be brought to the fore: ὄναιό σου, “Bless you for . . .” The blessing is a curse. More literally it is “May you have the advantage of . . .” Gellius defies the *familiaris* to actually derive any advantage from his manifold learning. And if this man, the master of the riddles of Homeric verses, were at all wise, he would understand that one really needs only a single verse of Homer and the Socratic riddle/commentary on it to begin to compose a book of sensible scholarship.³² The chapter itself ends where the *Noctes* begins: with the commentary on a commentary, with a text about a text, with a life lived in relationship to a book. The chapter ends in Gellius’s Socrates’ Homer’s voice. The words are home truths.

32. The Birth of Philosophy and the Birth of Philology are not unrelated: Democritus is said to have written a Περί Ὁμήρου ἢ Ὀρθοεπειῆς καὶ γλωσσέων (A33 DK). “Is said to have written . . .”: specifically Diogenes Laertius says that Thrasyllus says that . . . (Diogenes Laertius 9.45–49). See also Porter on Nietzsche’s relationship to Democritus (Porter 2000). Compare the case of Hecataeus of Abdera (A1 DK) and Heraclitus (B10 DK): they too were philologist philosophers.

IV

Quod in libris Gellii scriptum est amicum suum scire quo nomine fuerit, qui primus “grammaticus” appellatus est.

What was the name of the first grammarian?³³ Who was first to ask who was first? Gellius knows, but he will not tell.³⁴ The recursive logic of the commentary on commentary entails the elision of the first commentator. In his place we find instead the eternal community of commentary. The community will collect tales of the first grammarian perhaps, lists of candidates for the first, and so too lists of men who said that some other man was first.³⁵ The bare fact “X was first” when deracinated from the soil of commentary sits there inert. At best it is listed as the contents of another book. But it finds no useful place in the *Noctes*. Gellius prefers to write of doubled firsts and substituted origins.

Gellius tells us a story of Gellius. When Gellius is at ease, when he has *otium*, he goes for a ride or a stroll and investigates various little philological questions (11.3.1). As Gellius strolls about the city, he also wanders through the stacks of the mental library and thumbs various dusty volumes. His example in this chapter is the variety of conjunctions in Latin: *qualis quantaque esset particularum quarundam in oratione Latina uarietas* (11.3.1). The quality and quantity of these “particles” interests Gellius. The fragments of speech itself are assembled, surveyed, counted. One can compare the particles of knowledge that fill the *Noctes*: their quality and quantity are worth considering when one has the *otium* for such things. Gellius catalogs for himself various uses of the preposition *pro*: it can mean “in the name of,” “in the place of,” “in front of” in a concrete sense, “in front of” in an abstract sense, and “in virtue of.” But this list of mine is already a commentary: Gellius only offers a list structured via *aliter . . . aliter . . .*: “*pro* is used one way in this passage, another in this, another in . . .” (11.3.2). That is, Gellius only enumerates difference itself; he does not actually comment on it.

33. Compare Vergilius Maro Grammaticus who knows and tells. He has a catalog of grammarians that begins with Donatus, a Trojan who lived for a thousand years and who met Romulus the founder of Rome (*Epitomae* 15). The whole catalog is spectacularly impossible: Vergilius’s knowing and telling immediately challenge our own sense of “knowing.”

34. The introduction to Kaster 1995 ought to be consulted by the curious.

35. Notice, then, what happens in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.16.79.3: Ἀπολλόδωρος δὲ ὁ Κυμαῖος πρῶτος <τοῦ γραμματικοῦ ἀντί> τοῦ κριτικοῦ εἰσηγήσατο τοῦτομα καὶ γραμματικὸς προσηγορεύθη, ἔνιοι δὲ Ἐρατοσθένη τὸν Κυρηναῖον φασιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐξέδωκεν οὗτος βιβλία δύο “γραμματικά” ἐπιγράψας. ὠνομάσθη δὲ γραμματικός, ὡς νῦν ὀνομάζομεν, πρῶτος Πραξιφάνης Διονυσιοφάνους Μιτυληναῖος.

Gellius avoids commentary on *pro* itself because he prefers instead to comment on the commentary of others who discuss this word and then to challenge his reader to wander in his footsteps toward the very same conclusion:

Sed has omnes dictiones qui aut omnino similes et pares aut usquequaque diuersas existimaret, errare arbitrabar; nam uarietatem istam eiusdem quidem fontis et capitis, non eiusdem tamen esse finis putabam. Quod profecto facile intelleget, si quis adhibeat ad meditationem suam intentionem et habeat ueteris orationis usum atque notitiam celebriorem.

But if someone thought that all these expressions were either entirely similar and equivalent or utterly different, my judgment was that he erred. For I thought that this variety certainly arose from the same source and headspring; its terminus, though, was not the same. This is easily understood by anyone provided he attends to and reflects upon the topic and provided he has extensive experience with and knowledge of archaic speech.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 11.3.3–4

As Gellius strolls/thinks randomly, he takes up a question and passes a verdict: others who do not have my store of knowledge and my *savoir-faire* when it comes to using this knowledge, these others have wandered astray (*errare*). But “in place of” (*pro*) that imagined challenge to another as he walked, Gellius substitutes (*pro*) and sets before the reader (*pro*) another indefinite someone (*quis*). Anyone who were to stroll and to consider the question attentively would come to the conclusion Gellius came to when he strolled. But this easy understanding comes if and only if one is already a master antiquarian. *Usus* here is not “how one spoke” but instead “the practical experience of handling the question of how one spoke.” Gellius provides not a commentary on ancient practice but rather a commentary on the practice of commenting on antiquity. Those who have/will have substituted Gellius for themselves and themselves for Gellius (*pro Gellio*) know that they can plead on behalf of Gellius (*pro Gellio*) and reach the properly plural end/definition/*finis* of the question of the knowledge of particles of knowledge as well as the knowers thereof.

V

“Triones” per sese nihil significare aiunt, sed uocabuli esse supplementum.

It is possible, though, to conduct an investigation into a commentary in its own right. Gellius begins 17.7 by discussing an ancient Antinian law. We

note in it “an obscure use of a common tense.”³⁶ The law says, *Quod subruptum erit, eius rei aeterna auctoritas esto* (17.7.1). Gellius declares that anyone would normally take *subruptum erit* to refer to the future. But Quintus Scaevola says that his father and Brutus and Manilius—all of them are very learned men, *adprime doctos*—had wondered whether *subruptum erit* might not also indicate the past as well (17.7.3).

Gellius’s reaction to the surprising line of inquiry opened up by Scaevola’s elders is to turn to yet another authority, Nigidius Figulus. Or rather, Gellius has all along been reading Nigidius Figulus. The second paragraph reveals what is almost certainly the source for the first: “Accordingly, Publius Nigidius, the most learned man of the Roman state, wrote about this doubt of theirs in the twenty-third book of his *Grammatical Commentaries*.”³⁷ The *itaque* with which the sentence opens disorients until one realizes that the logical connection is motivated not by the meaning of the law but rather by the existence of the dispute. Because the authorities were disputing about authority, Nigidius, an authority in his own right, says Gellius, commented on this in his commentaries. And the comments of the commentaries are about to be written into Gellius’s *commentarii*. But this is easier said than done. Nigidius’s justification for his verdict is itself uncertain and ambiguous: Nigidius’s discussion is extremely crabbed and obscure (*sed anguste perquam et obscure disserit*).

Nigidius wants us to take a double look at *subruptum erit*. Gellius wants us to take a double look at Nigidius, too. He pilfers some words from Nigidius but only so as to restore to them an authority that the words may have lost in and of themselves. What had happened and what will have happened converge: the thing subtracted is commanded to be returned to its proper authority. And yet the authority of the authoritative commentary is propped up by the supplementary commentary of the later commentator. The “original” and “first” commentary is thus returned but with a difference, with a supplement of the same idea superadded to itself by way of commentary. Gellius gives us Nigidius plus Gellius-on-Nigidius. He restores Nigidius to himself by disappropriating him from himself. He restores Nigidius to himself as he hands him off to us. Naturally, we are inclined to comment on both Gellius and Nigidius at this juncture: *eius rei aeterna auctoritas esto*.³⁸

36. *tempus item in uerbo perspicuo obscurissimum* (18.2.6). See again the earlier discussion of *usus*.

37. *Itaque P. Nigidius, ciuitatis Romanae doctissimus, super dubitatione hac eorum scripsit in tertio uicesimo grammaticorum commentariorum* (17.3.4).

38. For the former, see the book you see before you at this very moment. For the latter, see Julien 1998: the notes to her translation of this passage contain numerous useful references to articles concerning ambiguous aspects of the Latin verbal system.

The supplementary logic of 17.7 extends into still further dimensions. There was something missing in Nigidius. “Accordingly” (*itaque*), Gellius made good the defect by restoring what Nigidius seemed to say to what Nigidius in fact said. Nigidius’s commentary thus becomes both itself plus the addition of the image of itself, what it is plus what it seems to be. “What it is” we can designate as “a commentary.” “What it seems to be” we can designate as the representation of that commentary within Gellius’s own commentary. That is, it seems to be what it is seen being. The action of the seer affects and supplements the thing seen. We can call this the Gellian certainty principle in honor of its inverse, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. While the latter governs the hermeneutics of our age, the former produces authoritative readings by adding authority to the authorized. “You can see this” happening in this chapter. When Gellius says, “You can see that Nigidius . . .” (*uideas*; 17.7.5), he tells his reader what I am telling my reader: to see is to supplement authoritatively. If you see Nigidius as Gellius saw Nigidius—and, of course, you will—then you will restore to Nigidius the same eternal authority that you can see Gellius restoring to him. Naturally, one might claim the converse proposition: a reader actually becomes authorized by seeming/being seen to lend authority to authority.

But supplementarity is not through with its dalliance with recursion in this chapter. In fact, I began my own commentary at the end and obscured the crabbed question of the relationship between these two themes. Gellius may be supplementing Nigidius, but Nigidius is supplementing Scaevola. Or rather, he is supplementing what Scaevola said his father Brutus and Manilius said. The totally nonauthorized reader is the *quis*, who would naturally take *subruptum erit* for (merely) a future tense rather than a future tense supplemented by a past tense. Compare the chain of authorities who authorize one another by citing and supplementing each link in that chain. The future of this argument and the property rights over it reflect a double tense of philology itself: it is both a future perfect and a past tense. The French *futur antérieur* captures this vital equivocation. Moreover, the future is commanded, *esto*, to forever go back into the archive and to comment on commentaries. What begins as a reading of the words of an ancient law becomes an occasion to behold the ancient Law of Philology and an obscure tense entombed in its words about words.

<Vb>

<*****>

The paradox of the sorites merges into the illogic of the supplement. Take, for example, the logic of *Noctes* 1.3. Gellius begins 1.3 with the tale of Chilo

on his deathbed: the wise man is tortured in his final hours by the thought of an injustice he may have done when he was serving as a judge in a case involving a friend.³⁹ This long chapter could easily have ended in 1.3.9, but instead 1.3.10 adds on to the story of Chilo a set of bibliographic inquiries that are twice as long as the anecdote that stands at the head of the chapter. The lemma to 1.3 inverts the economy of the chapter as a whole: it spends two thirds of its brief span on Chilo, and then a brief appendix to it mentions that other stories will be mentioned.

From Chilo, Gellius moves over to Theophrastus. But then it becomes clear that he is actually more interested in Cicero. Gellius wants to discuss how Cicero's *De amicitia* relates to Theophrastus's thought, and, specifically, how Cicero glossed over the most difficult aspect of Theophrastus's argument when it came time to discuss the conflict between friendship and honor that had preoccupied Chilo as well. Gellius then supplements Cicero with the Theophrastus that Cicero had himself omitted. That is, Gellius adds by "restoring." The supplement is not presented as "Gellius's"; instead, one book fills a gap in another book. Gellius is merely the one who fills his book with the annotations of how and where such supplements can and should be made.

Gellius makes up the gap in Cicero. First, he points it out and traces its outline (1.3.10–12 and 1.3.21–22). Next, he translates a segment of Theophrastus that can fill this gap (1.3.23–25). And finally in addition to this translation, Gellius offers Theophrastus's own words: *Verba adeo ipsa Theophrasti super ea re adscripsi*: . . . (1.3.25). Cicero is doubly supplemented: both Gellius's Latin Theophrastus and Theophrastus's Greek Theophrastus are added to his argument.

The chapter has by no means ended. More details are on their way. This time Favorinus is added to the transnational and transgenerational discussion of duties and friendship. Of course, Favorinus is a friend to whom Gellius is dutiful, so he is no random addition. The logic of accumulation requires only the least of transitions, *Fauorinus quoque*. . . ., Favorinus as well . . . (1.3.27). After what we subsequently appreciate to be a Latin gloss, Gellius adds on a (re)definition of χάρις in Favorinus's own (Greek) words. Favorinus defined favor as the relaxing of precision in a time of need.⁴⁰ Certainly, the precise rules of time and logic, of before and after, are routinely relaxed in Gellius to meet the need of showing favor to friends and

39. Compare Gellius as judge and the earlier discussion of 14.2.

40. Ἡ καλουμένη χάρις παρὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, τοῦτό ἐστιν ὕφεσις ἀκριβείας ἐν δέοντι (1.3.27).

their words as well as to insinuating oneself into the affable company of past literary lights.

The logic of the next sentence of this chapter is striking: *Post deinde idem Theophrastus ad hanc ferme sententiam disseruit: . . .* (1.3.28). “Afterward this same Theophrastus took it from there and discoursed roughly thus . . .” “Afterward,” *post*. After what? “From there or next,” *deinde*. From where? The obvious answer is something like “in the next phase of his argument.” But there is another “after” available to us and another “from there,” namely, after Favorinus supplemented his argument, Theophrastus resumed roughly as follows . . . Or we can say after Gellius supplemented Theophrastus’s argument with Favorinus, Theophrastus resumed roughly as follows . . . Precision has been relaxed as per Favorinus’s definition that certain things should be ill-defined.

Gellius concludes his discussion of Theophrastus by noting that, despite the detailed arguments he has offered, Theophrastus does not actually come to a conclusion about this matter and he does not formulate a universal rule. This lack of logical closure by no means dispirits Gellius; rather he is thrilled to be able to keep his little disputation going (*disputatiunculae huius*; 1.3.30). He returns to Chilo for a maxim.

One notes, though, that even if Chilo does offer a universal rule—the thing Theophrastus did not offer—this maxim does not really address the problem of duty and friendship or any of the associated complexities. The return to Chilo is thus but another supplement; Chilo both supplements Theophrastus and Chilo himself as discussed before in the chapter. The supplement is presented as something that fills up or rounds out the prior material, but it in fact steers it off in a new direction: “Love according to this limit: perhaps you will even one day hate. Accordingly, hate as well this far: perhaps one day you will later love.”⁴¹

As Rolfe notes, though, in Cicero’s *De amicitia* this sentiment is attributed to Bias.⁴² Gellius proves himself something of a fickle friend to Cicero’s text if he has forgotten this detail. Moreover, in Cicero the idea is presented as scandalous and the undoing of friendship itself. However, for Gellius this idea qua supplementary citation is the stuff of which a chapter of the *Noctes* is made. That is, the coherence of Gellius’s text can emerge in precise contradistinction to the logical coherence of the texts cited. And Gellius sticks to this logic of the citation. The supplement

41. “Hac” inquit “fini ames, tamquam forte fortuna et osurus, hac itidem tenus oderis, tamquam fortasse post amaturus” (1.3.30).

42. Rolfe 1927. See Cicero, *De amicitia* 59.

is itself supplemented: Plutarch has a related anecdote about Chilo in his *On the Soul*: Chilo once asked a man who said he had no enemy if he had no friend (1.3.31). And the chapter ends with Plutarch's gloss on Chilo's quip.

In the gracious world of learning, one helps one's friends and hurts one's enemies. When need arises, when *usus uenit*, precision can be relaxed. The game of philology is played in accordance with the rules of friendship, of *philia* for *logoi*. The lover of books accumulates friends by accumulating citations. Moreover, owing to the relaxed rules of before and after, these new friends include the authors of the books cited. The gracious act that a philologist offers to both concrete friend and book friend, though, is the citation. But the logic of citations parallels the logic of gift exchange: it moves ever onward. Permanent circulation is prized; the gift to end all gifts is eschewed. Citations become supplementary citations. Knowledge is exchanged and accumulated according to this logic rather than to logical logic. Holford-Strevens insists that Gellius's logical failings are due to incomprehension.⁴³ But perhaps all we should say is that Gellius is much more true to the logic of antiquarianism than he is to any other species of *ratio*.

VI

Quid sint subsiciua et subsecundaria opera.

Despite the fondness for the idea of origins in antiquarian discourse, the origin is loved precisely as a fantasy, as the image of a thing. The origin is itself but another symbol or token to be shuffled around and exchanged. A story that contains, then, three origins for a thing is even more exciting than one that can offer only a single meager origin. Therefore, I would prefer not to take a stand, not to say that the notes produced the biography as appendage or that the life produced the notes as supplement. Both are simultaneously origins of/for one another. Similarly, Gellius gives birth to the *Noctes* and the *Noctes* to Gellius: he is both the father and the child of the book he offers to his children.

The supplement fills up even as it displaces. It makes good defects even as it produces new ones. The loss of the original is to be not mourned but celebrated as an occasion for comment. And comment itself is an occasion for further comment. In this manner we can remain undisturbed by the ill fit between the thing and the story of the thing. And more importantly,

43. Holford-Strevens 1988:71.

we can remain impassive in the face of the ultimate loss of the thing amid the endless stories of stories of the thing.⁴⁴ Supplements that themselves invite supplementation circulate. Fragments are broken off that can themselves be resituated into new mosaics of knowledge. Comments about translating Greek themselves shift/are translated into a commentary on Homer as translated by Vergil (9.9). And this commentary itself is transformed into a commentary on the comments made by a student of Valerius Probus to the effect that Vergil did a poor job of adapting *Odyssey* 6 in *Aeneid* 1 (9.9.12). Then Gellius repeats what Probus's students say about what Probus said about this scene. The criticism of Vergil has attached itself as an inevitable appendix to the text of Vergil itself. Recalling Vergil recalling Homer now entails as well recalling recollections of Probus.⁴⁵

The story of the story turns into part of the story itself. The situation thus parallels Foucault's comments about natural history in the sixteenth century. That natural history is very much akin to the spirit of Pliny's *Natural History*. And the methods of Pliny resemble as well those of Gellius. Foucault observes of the natural historians that "[t]o know an animal or a plant or any terrestrial thing whatever, is to gather together the whole dense layer of signs with which it or they may have been covered."⁴⁶ Going back to the origins of the "thing itself" constitutes an error in such a system. There may be a true tale and a logic of etymology lurking at the birth of a thing, but the authority and the use of the thing as well as the use that authorities have made of the thing are themselves vital components of the truth of any given object.

Foucault links this accumulation of narratives to a sense that the world as a whole is legible, is given to be read, *legenda*.⁴⁷ This proposition suits the ancient situation as well, particularly where one is talking of books. Of course, books are meant to be read; why else are they written? The relationship between talk and book, though, differs in antiquity. The two modes are in an ironic "dialogue" in which each simultaneously props up and subverts the other. Foucault's sixteenth century endlessly proliferates commentary after the fashion of the ancient antiquarians: interpretation, not seeing or demonstrating, is the foundation of knowledge. For the ancients a key model of interpretation is the community of the dinner table, the infinite synchronic feast in a room that abuts an unbounded library.

44. See Porter 2005b:30–31 and the infinite retreat of the ancient within antiquity. Nietzsche was arch about the quixotic results.

45. See Martindale 1993.

46. Foucault 1973:40.

47. Foucault 1973:39.

The enabling condition of this language to infinity, though, diverges from that of the sixteenth century. Foucault posits the one true Text, the sovereignty of the divine Word as that which grounds the world of commentary in that era.⁴⁸ Everyone comments with an eye to getting back to or approximating that origin/original. The primal written word both promises and postpones, says Foucault. There is no one first text in antiquity: the monotheistic impulse is generally lacking in ancient hermeneutics.⁴⁹ As a corollary we should ourselves be as wary of readings of Gellius that fall within the tradition of biblical hermeneutics as Gellius was of cryptographic readings of Homer.⁵⁰ These are possible but “forbidden” and “refused” by the *Noctes* itself.⁵¹

An Olympian polytheism or a Roman senate of critics provides a better model. Naturally, the advent of the emperor affects the basis of the foundational metaphor of the act of reading. The consequences are, though, political rather than theological. Emperors come and go; they can even be killed. They represent a certain configuration of authority while also being mere representatives of that authority. Authority, practice, and logic can all three subsist in a dynamic tension in the community of ancient scholarship in a manner that never allows for the total elimination of any one element of this quasi triumvirate. There is no first grammarian. His name is not forbidden, though, in the manner that one cannot utter the name of God. Rather, it is effaced in the way that one tears down the statue of a tyrant. The community of criticism is not faithful to any origins other than the dissembled ones of the community itself: they set aside the sublime, the transcendental, the secret origin, the One. That is, Gellius eschews any quasi-mystic decoding and esoteric reading of his texts. Everything is exoteric and to be discussed before the entire community of the erudite.

It is time, then, to think through the words *libri librorum*. It appears to be a nominative plural plus a genitive plural: *libri* of *libri*, then. This leaves two questions: What are *libri*, and what is the status of the “of”? Specifically, is

48. Foucault 1973:41.

49. An irony: Holsinger 2005:182–83 argues for a Barthes who aims at a “secularization of interpretation” and who does so by stripping the theology from medieval hermeneutics. And yet medieval hermeneutics itself was the one that added theology to ancient hermeneutics.

50. *Item etiam istic scriptum fuit, qui sint apud Homerum uersus isopsephi; et quorum ibi nominum παραστιχίς reperiatur; et quis adeo uersus sit, qui per singula uocabula singulis syllabis increseat* (14.6.4).

51. Contrast Ahl 1984: only when we appreciate the cryptographic techniques of seemingly second-rate classical authors will we come to realize that they are in fact first rate. The masterful author intended to hide from Caesar, but not from us and our own sovereign hermeneutics.

it an objective or a subjective genitive? *Libri* are books. The title means, then, “Books of Books.” But are the latter books the subjects or the objects of the former books? Perhaps the second set of books “owns” the first set: “These are the books that belong to the books?” Perhaps the second set of books are the contents of the first set: “These books are described in those books.” It is clear enough that one possibility is much more likely than the other. However, it should also be clear that both possibilities remain pointedly possible. The recursive and reciprocal action of antiquarianism means that both senses are always in play. It also means that the punning image of *liberi*, “children,” also comes into play as well: who is the father of the λογός, who the child? Plato can answer this question. In fact, he is determined to answer it. An antiquarian cannot and will not. Antiquarians are all children of the book: even as they give birth to books, books also give birth to them. They hand books down to their biological children even as they themselves were the sons not of their own biological fathers but rather of the men whose books they heard and whose discussions they attended/read/wrote.

Gellius writes that he will write when he has free time left over from cultivating his children (*a cultu liberorum meorum*; pr. 23). The books that will cultivate his children and that will supplement their learning are written in the leftover/supplementary time (*subsiciua et subsecundaria tempora*) that remains to Gellius the cultivator of children. The first reason we have available to us today is in fact a supplementary one. That is, the fragmentary preface of the *Noctes* opens with *ad hoc*: “additionally.” Additionally, the *Noctes* will allow Gellius’s children to relax when they have some supplementary time.⁵² The infinity of the library and of books about books unfolds specifically within the space of the remainder: antiquarianism is the leftover terrain of knowledge that one passes on as a legacy. But this residual legacy of (dis)appropriated leftovers is hardly humble or meager. It is instead a field that is infinitely fertile even as it itself requires infinite cultivation: one reaps as one sows in the land of books.

52. *ad hoc ut liberis quoque meis partae istiusmodi remissiones essent, quando animus eorum interstitio aliquā negotiorum data laxari indulgerique potuisset* (pr. 1).

LIBER SEPTIMVS



Auctoris Auctores

I

Lis atque contentio grammaticorum inlustrum enarrata super casu uocatiuo uocabuli, quod est "auctor."

Auctoris Auctores: the phrase plays roughly the same game as *libri librorum*. Is this "the authors of the author" or "the author's authors." Who is the subject of the implied verb "to author" and who the object? The action is reciprocal, *reciprocum*, ἀντιστρέφον: each party authors and authorizes the other.¹ Is it possible to be objective about antiquarianism? That is, can antiquarianism be made an object of inquiry, an object like any other object? Can it be made an object such that the subject who contemplates it does not participate in it? That is, can one stand in judgment of antiquarianism?² Perhaps it is rather the case that one judges antiquarianism as Chilo judged the case of his friend, as an anxious partisan with a guilty conscience on the matter of objectivity.³ But Chilo's remorse itself is but another occasion for antiquarian intervention, for the subject of antiquarianism to appear even as the antique object is under investigation.

Antiquarian reading is about nothing so much as an embrace of the polyphonous alterity of the community of scholars and of the archive. Antiquarian writing is filled with voices.⁴ Reading generates a self that is thoroughly authored by the authors thereby consumed and digested. But this reading is always also a misreading that both self-authors and reauthors the authors ostensibly consumed and digested.⁵ "To philologize" is accordingly

1. Compare the "catastrophic" in Derrida 1987.

2. Compare and contrast Nietzsche 1997:88–90.

3. See the earlier discussion of 1.3.

4. See Bakhtin 1981:52–53 on Gellius's place in the prehistory of the novel.

5. Here and throughout compare Socrates writing Plato and Plato writing Socrates from Derrida 1987.

a verb in need of philological inquiry. It is a verb that, despite its morphology, is always articulated in the middle voice. Therefore, it is a “direct reflexive middle,” where the subject acts on himself. It is as well an “indirect reflexive middle,” where the subject acts for himself, with reference to himself, or with something belonging to himself. And so too is it a “reciprocal middle” even when used in the singular. An example of another such verb: διαλέγεσθαι.⁶

I would like to examine, then, five case studies of the dialogic imagination of antiquarianism at work.⁷ This imagination specifically produces a sense of “the author” who haunts both the text being read and the text (we read) being written. This author is not a uniform and static creature. On the contrary, it changes shape regularly. However, the author effect of antiquarian discourse—its tendency to generate authorized and authoritative authors—is itself not nearly as plastic. Even if the various species thereby generated may be different from one another, “this philologist,” “that philologist,” the genus itself abides, “the philologist.” The genus abides, though, owing to the stability of a sense of the archive and the manner in which the author-function is predicated on the book-function. That is, where there are books, we necessarily posit “authors.” But we perhaps therewith confuse effects with causes and causes with effects.

II

Quod Q. Ennius auctor Noctium Atticarum sit.

Ennius is not just the object of antiquarian investigation; he is himself an antiquarian. His works betray his erudition. Only an erudite person can properly appreciate them. The Roman Homer, then, is not a pure author; he is a hybrid one: he not only has three hearts, a Greek, a Latin, and an Oscan one (17.17.1), but he is an author in multiple genres, epic, drama, and satire—whatever that might mean in his case.⁸ And his epic is a multiplicity in itself: it is both a poem in its own right and a commentary on Homer.

Only a learned man can read the learned poet. There is a future-perfect/past-perfect problem here: you must have been what you will be in order to read Ennius.

Gellius praises a scene from the seventh book of the *Annales* at *Noctes* 12.4.⁹

6. See Smyth and Messing 1956:\$1717, \$1719, and \$1726. Consider also \$1725.

7. In addition to Bakhtin 1981, see also Martindale 1993:29–34.

8. See Freudenburg 2005:2–4.

9. On the scene itself, see Habinek 1998:50–51 and especially 51n49.

Descriptum definitumque est a Quinto Ennio in annali septimo graphice admodum sciteque sub historia Gemini Seruili, uiri nobilis, quo ingenio, qua comitate, qua modestia, qua fide, qua linguae parsimonia, qua loquendi oportunitate, quanta rerum antiquarum morumque ueterum ac nouorum scientia quantaque seruandi tuendique secreti religione, qualibus denique ad minuendas uitae molestias fomentis, leuamentis, solaciis amicum esse conueniat hominis genere et fortuna superioris.

In the course of the story of Geminus Servilius, a noble man, Quintus Ennius in the seventh book of the *Annales* described and defined with great perfection and intelligence the character, the tact, the modesty, the fidelity, the sparing language, the timely speech, the knowledge of ancient and current matters and customs, the pious regard for watching and preserving a secret, in short, the balms, solaces, and comforts for lessening life's difficulties that one ought to possess if he is the friend of a man of superior birth and rank.

—AULUS GELLIUS, *Noctes Atticae* 12.4.1

Gellius offers a vivid and clever portrait of Ennius's vivid and clever description and definition of the noble Servilius, a man whose quasi servility ultimately ennobles him. Ennius writes. Ennius defines. Gellius rewrites himself into the boundaries laid down by Ennius. The description of Servilius, then, works as a description of the man whom Gellius himself aspires to be. Geminus Servilius, "Servile Twin," doubles/enslaves Gellius: he is clever, affable, modest, faithful, knows the economy of speech, and studies antiquity. In short, *denique*, he knows all the sorts of things that are useful for life itself and that are useful for a life lived in companionship with other similar men. This is a self-description via the other. It is to write oneself by annotating another's writings. Reading Ennius entails becoming a Geminus to Ennius.

The scene of inequality that Ennius wrote into the *Annales* offers a ready allegory for the poet's own relationship to the elites of his own day, men like Scipio. Ennius, the lesser partner, ennobles the act of the lesser partner while also inscribing and defining his boundedness from above by the aristocracy. Gellius closes this chapter with the remark, "They say that Stilo used to declare that Ennius wrote these words about none other than himself (*de semet ipso*)" (12.4.4). Gellius, in the voice of another commentator on Ennius, comments that we are hearing Ennius's own voice. But are Gellius's declarations about Ennius also written about himself? Is this all *de semet ipso*?

The lesser partner is the noble antiquarian servant to the great friend. Ennius the humble antiquarian writes as much into his proud—"I am Homer reborn"—epic. Gellius's rewrite of Ennius's scene implies an assumption for himself of the role of the noble antiquarian and lesser friend to the *Annales*, a peerless member of the aristocracy of literature. But this same gesture covertly implies more as well: "I am Ennius reborn." Nevertheless, even this will to power of commentary is itself already written by Ennius. Ennius has penned not just the *Annales* but also the *Noctes-on-the-Annales*.¹⁰ Ennius has inscribed in advance his own metempsychosis: the reader of the reader of Homer will be the reader of Homer reborn. Gellius will be Ennius.

Gellius says that one must read and memorize these verses. The lines are comparable to the philosophers and their books titled *On Duties*. Ennius on the duty of the humble antiquarian friend becomes as important as the philosophy of duty for Gellius the dutiful reader.¹¹ Gellius is almost done with his introduction to the passage. He has but one more sentence of his own. "And so I figured that I ought to insert the verses in case someone desired them ASAP" (*Quapropter adscribendos eos existimaui, si quis iam statim desideraret*; 12.4.4). The reader so desires precisely in measure as Gellius himself has provoked this desire. Gellius-on-Ennius whets the appetite. And yet upon reflection we see that it was Ennius-on-Gellius that seems to have most excited Gellius into making a phantasmic hypothesis concerning our own desire: Gellius-on-Us. But what of Us-on-Gellius? Is he ghostwriting our commentary as Ennius's shade penned his?¹²

III

Quod Macrobius auctor Noctium Atticarum sit.

I hesitate to write of Macrobius. He deserves his own book. But perhaps the present book has been about Macrobius all along.

Macrobius's *Saturnalia* is in many respects the same book as Gellius's *Noctes Atticae*.¹³ The themes and the setting of the one text are more than

10. Compare Hinds 1997. Here and in the next sections, see especially Hinds 1997:123–44.

11. *Eos ego uersus non minus frequenti adsiduoque memoratu dignos puto quam philosophorum de officiis decreta* (12.4.2).

12. See Derrida 1994 again: "The time is out of joint." It might also be noted that Blanchot ghostwrites Derrida's commentary on Marx. Similarly, the attentive will perhaps hear the silent footsteps of Deleuze 1994:88 in Derrida as well.

13. For an overview of the Latin Revival of the fourth century, see Cameron 1984. On Macrobius specifically, see Cameron 1966, where it emerges that Macrobius must be a fifth-century author writing a work that is nostalgic for the fourth-century revival of Latin

familiar from the other. But more significantly, whole passages of Macrobius are lifted straight from Gellius. For example, virtually the whole of *Noctes Atticae* 3.2 is lifted from its original noncontext and sutured into the feast of knowledge Macrobius offers.¹⁴ What was once a self-standing fragment of knowledge in Gellius has become a speech by Caecina offered to the table of learned men.

This moment is emblematic. The *Saturnalia* undoes the *disparilitas* of the *Noctes Atticae* and then redoes it. A basic structuring element of the *Noctes* is its disparity, its resistance to structure. If the scatter of the *Noctes* is a vital principle of its “organization,” the *Saturnalia* is structured around a reading of the *Noctes* that has mined from it specific details. Macrobius has done, then, a Gellian reading of Gellius. He does not perform a Gellian rewriting of Gellius, though. Macrobius’s perverse gesture is to rewrite Gellius as a unity.¹⁵

If the *Saturnalia* is a festival of inversion where slaves play masters and masters slaves, Macrobius has indeed inverted the spirit of his master text. One year a number of leading men and other learned fellows gathered at Vettius Praetextatus’s house in Rome during the *Saturnalia* and delegated the solemn festal time to liberal colloquy.¹⁶ With a few qualifications we can declare that Macrobius offers a unity of place, time, and action for his drama of erudition.¹⁷ The opening question of the *Saturnalia* is research into the festival of the *Saturnalia* itself. Still more unity: the play within the play explicates the theory and context of the broader play.

To the extent that there is disparity in the *Saturnalia*, it is differently motivated than that found in the *Noctes*. The *Noctes* is scattered because there is no unity of place, time, or action. The places are libraries, dinner parties, sea journeys, strolls, and solitary trips in a cart. Some chapters are even totally placeless and merely record some piece of knowledge without

and dramatizes an impossible feast of the learned of that age. To begin with, the ages of the participants do not work out correctly (*Saturnalia* 1.1.6; Cameron 1966:28). Cameron declares that secular Latin in the third century declined owing to the “false trail laid by the archaizing movement” (Cameron 1984:45). The false trail of the third century was itself blazed by the second century of Gellius *et al.* Cameron is offering a narrative of long-since dead literature. For him the chief role played by this era consists of “the preservation and copying of Latin texts” (1984:52). But sometimes a copy is not just a copy, and the thing preserved is not just retained on the page.

14. See Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.3.2–11.

15. NB: this is my own perverse gesture as well.

16. This roughly translates the first half of the first sentence following the preface of the *Saturnalia*, i.e., *Saturnalia* 1.1.1.

17. See Romeri 2000 for a call to reading Athenaeus as a whole despite the indigestible mass of this text, which is usually “used” for its parts.

the least gesture toward the knower as a worldly being. The times of the *Noctes* pointedly span the whole of Gellius's life, not just a single festival or a single night. And though the action is generally unified, "to philologize," the verb is variously treated: Gellius is passive as a reader, active as a writer, passive as an auditor, active as a speaker, and so on. And this central action can be complicated by a secondary action—seafaring, for example—or by involuted versions of itself such as reading speeches quoting texts.

The disparity in Macrobius can perhaps be described as polyphony. The differences in its different moments can be assigned to the alternation of speakers. These speakers themselves quote from works they have read, and this yields a second layer of polyphony, Caecina's Varro, for example. However, this second level of voices can be specious. Caecina's Varro is not, in fact, Caecina's; it is Gellius's. Let's take a closer look at *Saturnalia* 1.3.2: "[Caecina] thus began, 'Marcus Varro in the book of *Res humanae* dedicated to days . . .'" Everything after "thus began" comes straight out of Gellius. Roughly two pages of Macrobius is in fact a transcription of two pages of Gellius. Caecina appears to be displaying his erudition or, rather, his erudite appreciation of Varro's erudition. But Caecina is in fact parading Gellius's erudite appreciation of Varro's erudition without ever mentioning that his words are lifted from elsewhere. It is true that there are some differences in the two passages. Individual words are occasionally modified or added. There is a now-fragmentary expansion of the Gellius passage at *Saturnalia* 1.3.6. And when Caecina reaches the end of *Noctes* 3.2, he just keeps on going. In fact, one would never really notice that there is a suture here. The logic of the supplement makes such modes of composition easy: scholarly footnotes and examples can be added ad infinitum without anyone noticing a shift of author or voice provided the whole is "scholarly."

Macrobius's "original," Gellius, is little more than a figure who assembles citations and is weakly present as a voice in his own right. If Gellius is already citational and already derivative, we have to pose the question of Macrobius's (Caecina's) use of Gellius anew. "Plagiarism" is once again an utterly unsatisfying designation. Perhaps somebody is fooled, but it is by no means clear that we are supposed to be displeased either to remember or to discover that this segment of the *Saturnalia* is almost entirely a passage from the *Noctes*. Gellius himself has invited this sort of appropriation. Moreover, it is the very sort of appropriation that he himself employs. As we saw above, a life faithful to books and thoroughly bookish is already written into the *Noctes* itself.

"Intertextuality" is a more helpful way of talking about such issues. The term is evocative and broad. It does not necessarily evoke the "technology

of scholarship” to the extent that its use is more familiar in discussions of poets and studies of their studied allusions.¹⁸ Stephen Hinds’s book on intertextuality is itself an interesting and important resource for (re)reading Macrobius. Hinds cites Macrobius in order to illustrate Vergil’s practice and the ancient commentary on that practice. Nevertheless, Hinds elides Macrobius’s own logic of citation. Let us undo that elision and declare that there is a double reflexivity to Macrobius. Thus, if scholarship is itself poetic and intertextual, then the relationship between even objective and objectifying texts and those they purport to comment on takes on a much more protean cast especially when the commentaries are themselves citing, alluding to, and borrowing from one another. And finally the question of “life” cannot be left untouched in our invocation of intertextuality. Life and literature become reflexive, and doubly so. As it was written, so it was/will be lived. As it was lived, so it was/will be written.

The more one reads Macrobius, the more an unsettling notion arises: What if Gellius were doing a Macrobius to his sources? What if when the narrative voice of the *Noctes* says “thus began, ‘Marcus Varro in the book . . .,’” what if this narrator himself lifted the whole episode from some now-lost intermediary volume? This is almost certainly the case at various junctures in the *Noctes*. The real issue is the extent of the phenomenon. For example, Gellius lifted from Pliny the catalog of titles for the *Noctes* while quietly suppressing Pliny’s own complaints that antiquarians regularly suppress their originals.¹⁹

Gellius noted with some displeasure that Antonius Julianus’s words were in fact handbook words (18.5). Doth he protest too much, Gellius the writer of *commentarii*? I insinuated as much above. But let’s look again at the case of Julianus. When he “thus began,” he was in fact talking from memory. What seemed to be his voice was in fact a rehearsal of a *commentarius*. Julianus’s speech thus mirrors Caecina’s. What one wishes to say about a topic is, frequently, precisely the already-said about the topic, or, further, the already-said about the already-said about the topic. In the process the individual subject can be reduced to a mere vehicle of word-for-word citation. There is a place for doing one’s own reading and making one’s own remarks, but this species of “originality” and “authenticity” occurs within the horizon of a circumscribed universe of citations.²⁰

18. See Hinds 1997 on intertextuality and Latin poetry in general. See Hinds 1997:9 for reflexive annotation and its paradoxical chronologies.

19. Compare Pliny, *Naturalis historia* pr. 24–26 and *Noctes Atticae* pr. 22.

20. Compare Foucault 1997c:211.

Let us walk through Macrobius's preface as a means of introducing ourselves to the *Saturnalia* while reintroducing ourselves to the *Noctes*. Later we will examine a couple of further examples where the *Noctes* is sutured into Macrobius's text. For now, though, we should explore the rules of reading the *Saturnalia* that the narrator, "Macrobius," lays out for us. These rules consistently recall Gellius, but not necessarily the Gellius of the preface to the *Noctes*.

The *Saturnalia* is addressed to Macrobius's son. Macrobius tells his son about the way nature makes a man feel about his son and about educating and polishing one's children (*educandis atque erudiendis*). Education and erudition are thus at once on the table (of contents). Nothing is more important than your instruction, says Macrobius: *mihi quoque institutione tua nihil antiquius aestimatur*.²¹ We note a multiple play in the use of *antiquius*. The comparative of the adjective *antiquus* does indeed mean "better, preferable, more important." And this form is related to the "older" sense of *antiquus*, namely, "lying or situated in front." But the more familiar meaning of *antiquus* is, of course, "antique." Thus, to abuse Latin idiom yet again, "nothing is more antique than your education." This is the point: the importance of the education is its antiquity. An education consisting of old things is the better sort of education, and, conversely, an education concerning the better sort of things is an old-time education. Instituting one's child as an old-timer, this is the most important thing a father can do.

Macrobius is obsessed. He toils. The *otium* of the *Noctes*, the time of composition by the father and consumption by the sons, here becomes the *negotium* of the father and the son: both should busy themselves about this "antique/important" question of antiquity. Not content to let his son read only the books that might be assigned by his teachers, Macrobius reads and writes on his son's behalf: *sed ago ut ego quoque tibi legerim*.²² Or rather, he acts such that he too has already read on his son's behalf.

Legerim has returned, that obscure tense of a common word. It is a perfect subjunctive. It refers to past reading. But it is also clearly future in force. The sentence is situated in the present: *non opperor ut promoueas . . . sed ago ut . . .* Macrobius is impatient to ensure that his son's future be improved by his own past. And so he sees to it that his own past be converted into his son's future: "that I have read . . ." turns into "that I have written (this book) . . ." For the sentence continues by explaining that Macrobius has written down his reading for his son. The whole thing, this totality, he

21. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 1.

22. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 2.

says, is offered to his son so as to be the furnishings of his understanding: *id totum sit tibi scientiae supellex*.²³

Before you complain about the metaphor of furniture, let me push ahead to the next image: it is clear that we must retain the domestic economy of erudition. For Macrobius's reading is not just the furnishings of the "house of knowledge" in which his son will reside. Macrobius's reading will be like a certain *penus* of literature, stores from which he can readily draw off and take down any piece of knowledge when the need arises.²⁴ Accordingly, Macrobius evokes and expands precisely the metaphor evoked in Gellius's preface: the *penus* and its domestic economy. *Usus uenerit* here picks up *usus uenisset* there. Gellius's needs, though, arose for himself. Macrobius envisions his son's needs. They are, though, no different from the needs of his father, nor, for that matter, the needs of the metaphorical father of this father, Gellius the Needy.

Macrobius next, as had Gellius before him, addresses *disparilitas*. But Macrobius's difference is different from Gellius's. We note that as difference disseminates, it takes on a self-differing *différance*. Macrobius insists that he has not cast his knowledge into a confused heap (*nec indigeste tamquam in aceruum congesimus digna memoratu*).²⁵ Everything has in fact been "digested." The paradox of the sorites may haunt the *Noctes*, but the *Saturnalia* is a single and coherent thing. It is more than a coherent thing, though: it is a body. Macrobius uses *corpus* as both "body of knowledge" and "knowledge as body." This body specifically represents the overcoming of *disparilitas*. What was once a disparate collection of various items, diverse in its authorship, confused in its chronology, has been digested and metabolized into a body: *sed uariarum rerum disparilitas, auctoribus diuersa, confusa temporibus, ita in quoddam digesta corpus est*.²⁶ Reading and writing metabolize; they consume, transform, and redistribute the original material into a new and unitary body. Polyphony is thus subsumed and subordinated. It is not effaced, but this diverse collection of authors becomes a chorus harmoniously singing a paean to learning itself.

This body/body-of-knowledge has been sired by the father for his son. Fathering the child also obligated Macrobius to father a book, a book for his

23. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 2.

24. *et quasi de quodam litterarum peno, siquando usus uenerit aut historiae quae in librorum strue latens clam uulgo est, aut dicti factiue memorabilis reminiscendi, facile id tibi inuentu atque depromptu sit* (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 2).

25. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 3. Compare Frontinus, *Strategmata* 1.pr.2 on "heaps" of information that can overwhelm a reader. On this passage, see Skidmore 1996:49–50.

26. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 3. The bodily metaphor continues in the following *ut*-clause: *in ordinem instar membrorum*.

child. As we digest and redistribute this same book, we sire books/children of our own. But it is possible to take the relations between the members of the metaphor differently. Macrobius is the child of the books he read even as he offers them to his child. Macrobius may intervene as a stable figure, as a single body who offers a single body of learning, but this is nevertheless a provisional and partial figure. Macrobius is in fact something of a bastard child of Gellius. Macrobius is the child who cannibalized his father's disparate corpus and transformed that legacy into a unitary body that he bequeaths to his own reader/son.

The next sentence recognizes a problem. Will I be seen as a plagiarist? Plagiarism is not just an unsatisfying designation for antiquarian discourse, though; it is a forbidden one. Don't, says Macrobius, consider it a fault if I borrow the very words I read.²⁷ The son/reader is briefly conjured as a critic. In fact, the son/reader might already know the books that have been chewed up and digested. Father Macrobius might look like a man who leaves a bloody legacy of cannibalized culture and a *penus* of stolen wares. Not so, he says, "Because the present work promises not a show of eloquence, but a heap of things for knowing" (*quia praesens opus non eloquentiae ostentationem, sed noscendorum congeriem pollicetur*).²⁸ Authorship consists largely, then, of the collection and arrangement of ideas. Perhaps one has some few ideas of one's own, but for the most part ideas are on loan, while the words that convey those ideas are either themselves borrowed too or the inventions of the author as translator.²⁹ All authorship is thus a form of translation: to author is to transfer an idea from one place to another place.³⁰ These same rules of authorship work well for Gellius too. Macrobius only asks us to note whether one changes the phrasing of the words thus transferred. The former is "eloquence." The later is something else.

But what is the latter? It is, apparently, a pile of things for knowing. Macrobius has chosen a singularly unglamorous image. Worse still, he has chosen a metaphor we thought we had left behind: the *congeries* here recalls the *aceruus* just above. Macrobius said, "No indistinct heaps." And then he said, "Here, take this pile." The body that intervened has fallen into pieces

27. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 4.

28. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 4.

29. Charles Martindale asks us to ponder the symbiosis of imitation and plagiarism and thereupon to carry our thought into the more fertile category of translations (1993:74). Near the end of his journey through Seneca's *Letters*, John Henderson concludes, "And translation is a graphematic project—a matter of Philosophy, not Lexicology; in question, the philosophy of Philosophy" (2004:149).

30. Compare Martindale 1993:39 on interpretation as allegory, or saying otherwise.

again. But another text and another metaphor intervenes to put everything back together again. That is, Macrobius lifts again from another author another image of coherence in order to restore coherence to his account of the coherence of his own text. Enter Seneca. Seneca comes onto the stage, though, unannounced. Macrobius has already said that he would not announce such entrances, though.

This next section of Macrobius's preface is neither "his" nor "prefatory." Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 5–9 is nearly identical to Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 84.2–10: we can observe an ellipsis and some minor alterations. Nevertheless, Macrobius (re)produces perhaps three quarters of that letter. Seneca/Macrobius tell us that we ought to imitate bees: they gather nectar from various flowers and turn it into a single thing, honey.³¹ The passage opens, though, with an alteration: Seneca said, "We ought, as they say, imitate the bees." Macrobius says, "We ought, then, in some manner imitate the bees." *Ut aiunt* has been replaced by *enim quodammodo*. In a certain manner, then, the many voices that lay behind Seneca's commonplace have been effaced. So too has "As Seneca says . . ." gone missing. The unity of Macrobius both includes and effaces the heterogeneous textual moment of Seneca's letter on the relationship between heterogeneity and unity when it comes to reading/writing.

The metaphor of digestion is in Seneca's letter.³² But the nutrients of that letter have already passed into the body of the *Saturnalia* in such a manner that we cannot detect the boundaries between Gellius, Seneca, and Macrobius in the preface. And this despite the fact that the three really are disparate. Gellius's *corpus* admits Seneca but once, and then only to spit him out. Meanwhile, Seneca's philosophical *corpus* provides a disparate unity of moral reflections that generally eschews the accumulation of knowledge for its own sake: sage reflections are what one would do well to gather. And Macrobius, despite the unified surface of his text, is frequently not—in our sense—the author of it: instead, he has only sewn together swathes of other texts.

31. See De Rentiis 1998 on the bees of Seneca/Macrobius. She complicates Pigman 1980:6, who writes: "Macrobius conceives of imitation as a type of redistributive reproduction; for him making something different means setting it in a new context." Pigman's point is important in and of itself. But De Rentiis insists that we also retain the ambiguity of digestion/distribution rather than emphasizing only distribution. Her thesis is even stronger when one appreciates the extent to which this passage is a bit of Senecan spice thrown into a predominantly Gellian stew.

32. See Henderson 2004:46–48 on "the aspiration of making SENECA 'son, not clone,' of tradition" in/with this passage of the *Letters*. Keep reading Henderson to see how the theme plays itself out in the Senecan "corpus."

But Macrobius certainly lives up to the ideal of Seneca that he adapts (/records?) as his own: *fit concentus ex dissonis*.³³ A chorus is a consonant harmony of differing voices. Seneca said, though, that such is what he wished for our souls: *talem animum esse nostrum uolo*. Macrobius modifies this to *talem hoc praesens opus uolo*. Seneca's ideal soul is Macrobius's ideal work. The genealogy of the wise self in Seneca is turned into the origins of the erudite body-of-knowledge in Macrobius. Naturally, this body of knowledge is itself something one internalizes: it is both an external body, a book, a collection of members, and an internalized body, a body to be consumed and digested so as to form the substance of one's own erudite life of erudite recollections.

It is possible to imagine that a single episode of Gellius has given birth to the whole of Macrobius. The programmatic feast of learning during the Saturnalia at *Noctes* 18.13 has moved from *pars* to *totum*. He announced as much in his preface. Gellius's disparate body in pieces has authored "Macrobius," the author of a unitary revision of the *Noctes Atticae*. In the *Noctes* the *concentus ex dissonis* was the soul of Gellius. As was the single and singular life, so was the disparate book. In the *Saturnalia* the *concentus* is the *Saturnalia* itself: disparate books, including Gellius's disparate book, have become this single and singular opus.

Macrobius resumes "in his own voice" for only a few moments before quoting again. And yet it has long been clear that we really must set aside the distinction between "in his own voice" and "in the voice of the other." The Seneca was not a quote. That was Macrobius speaking. When in just a few moments Macrobius (re)produces words we already know from Gellius, *quod sit aut uoluptati legere aut cultui legisse aut usui meminisse*,³⁴ we understand that Macrobius has so taken his dissonant readings to heart, he has so made his own *animus* a *concentus*, that this programmatic passage is "authentically authored" by Macrobius. The pleasure of reading, the cultivation of having read, and the utility of memory that Gellius said one would not find in the tedious books of others you will find, *inuenies*, in Macrobius. What Gellius implicitly promises Macrobius explicitly promises. But in so promising he proves that Gellius's implicit promise has been made good. Macrobius the reader of Gellius makes good the debt Gellius contracted with his reader even as Macrobius contracts the very same debt, but with a *différance*, anew with his reader.

Macrobius promises his reader that his book will be useful and helpful.

33. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 9 (= Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 84.10).

34. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 10 (= Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* pr. 11)

He qualifies this, though. He is not a native speaker of Latin. Perhaps he will need to be forgiven, this man born under another sky, *sub alio ortum caelo*. But there is nothing to forgive: he shows us the way to our own happiness. In the place of acquiring Roman elegance, we can instead appropriate to ourselves stores of Roman knowledge. Rather than show off our eloquence, we can show off our heap of things for knowing. Knowing-Rome becomes becoming Roman. As in Gellius, the *tirocinium fori* has been replaced with the *tirocinium bibliothecae*.

<IIIb>

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I turn now to his other work: the subterranean, the interminably heroic, the peerless. And—such are the capacities of man!—the unfinished. This work, perhaps the most significant of our time, consists of the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part of *Don Quixote* and a fragment of chapter twenty-two. I know such an affirmation seems an absurdity; to justify this “absurdity” is the primordial object of this note. He did not want to compose another *Quixote*—which is easy—but *the Quixote itself*. To be, in some way, Cervantes and reach the *Quixote* seemed less arduous to him—and, consequently, less interesting—than to go on being Pierre Menard and reach the *Quixote* through the experiences of Pierre Menard. “To compose the *Quixote* at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a reasonable undertaking, necessary and perhaps even unavoidable; at the beginning of the twentieth, it is almost impossible. It is not in vain that three hundred years have gone by, filled with exceedingly complex events. Amongst them, to mention only one, is the *Quixote* itself.” Cervantes’s text and Menard’s are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. It is a revelation to compare Menard’s *Don Quixote* with Cervantes’s. He dedicated his scruples and his sleepless nights to repeating an already extant book in an alien tongue. Unfortunately, only a second Pierre Menard, inverting the other’s work, would be able to exhume and revive those lost Troys. . . . “Every man should be capable of all ideas and I understand that in the future this will be the case.” Menard (perhaps without wanting to) has enriched, by means of a new technique, the halting and rudimentary art of reading: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution.³⁵

35. [Borges 1964. The passage contains numerous ellipses that are not noted by the author of the *Nox*.—Ed.]

<IIIc>

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The *Saturnalia* is a book of table talk. Like Gellius, Macrobius is familiar with the history of the genre. Like Gellius, Macrobius is familiar with Gellius himself. The *argumentum sub prologi habitu*, the plot costumed as a prologue, of the *Saturnalia* recalls the convoluted story of the story from Plato's *Symposium*.³⁶ But the feast is—for present purposes, at least—thoroughly Gellian. Only an antiquarian thinks to dramatize knowledge itself. The characters in the drama are books and parts of texts: Look, here comes Plato's *Symposium*!³⁷ Next, enter stage right, the *Noctes Atticae* of Gellius.

To write Gellius into a book of table talk, what does this imply? As we have already seen, Gellius himself wrote of celebrating the *Saturnalia*.³⁸ Gellius wrote of men hosting one another in a (im)moveable feast of erudition. Gellius talked of captious table talk *chez* Taurus, the economy of literary exchange, and the “symbolic” contribution toward the common treasury of knowledge.³⁹ Macrobius picks up the tokens offered at Gellius's portraits of parties in order to paint his own scene of dining.⁴⁰ The coins are redistributed within the economy of the learned table. Macrobius insists yet again that a good party is a learned one, “for, as Musonius says, to loosen your wits is to lose them.”⁴¹ This is not a citation of Musonius, though, but a citation of Gellius citing Musonius. The words that follow the quote in Gellius also appear in Macrobius.⁴² This symbolic exchange of coins/words yields symbolic profits: the surplus value of the representations thus represented is the text itself, the *Saturnalia*. I've made double and perhaps captious use of “representation” here, but only to mirror Macrobius's own doubling of double/duplicitous Gellius.

36. Quotation from Macrobius, *Saturnalia* pr. 16. See Wilkins 2000:23–24 on Athenaeus's appropriation of Plato's *Symposium* as a structuring device for his own learned feast.

37. Macrobius's scenography, as is Gellius's, is routinely forgotten. However, the forgetful hermeneutics of the irregular philosophy of the party is as old as that first party book, the *Symposium*, a work that stages the forgetting of its own disparate textual texture. On the symposium/*Symposium*, see Henderson 2000.

38. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 18.2 and 18.13.

39. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 7.13. *Symbola* occurs in the summary of the chapter (7.13.12).

40. See *symbola* at Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.7.7 and 1.24.15.

41. *nam “remittere” inquit Musonius “animum quasi amittere est”* (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.5.12 [= Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 18.2.1]).

42. *sed demulcentes eum paulum atque laxantes iucundis honestisque sermonum inlectionibus*.

One casts them in the middle with a studied aleatory air: each is both a contribution and a challenge; those who fail this challenge, though, will nevertheless still be asked to make some sort of contribution, a monetary one, a literal coin since they cannot pay in the true, that is, metaphorical, coin of the realm. Conversely, those who succeed in identifying this sportive picnic for what it is can transform an hors d'oeuvre into an injunction to go seek out the *chefs d'oeuvre* of various *grandes hommes* of erudite literature.⁴³

Indeed, however empty this discourse may seem, it is so only if taken at its face value: that which justifies the remark of Mallarmé's, in which he compares the common use of language to the exchange of a coin whose obverse and reverse no longer bear any but effaced figures, and which people pass from hand to hand "in silence." This metaphor is enough to remind us that speech, even when almost completely worn out, retains its value as a *tessera*. *Même s'il ne communique rien, le discours représente l'existence de la communication; même s'il nie l'évidence, il affirme que la parole constitue la vérité; même s'il est destiné à tromper, il spéculé sur la foi dans le témoignage.*⁴⁴

Gellius represents a dinner. At the table one exchanges learned tokens. They pass from hand to hand. Even when they are captious and destined/intended to deceive, there is something specular/speculative about them.⁴⁵ The movement of the signed/stamped archaic coins is itself the source of profit and loss.⁴⁶ Despite the figures impressed upon them, we have departed from the gold standard of the archaic in itself. Instead, "archaism," the (re)presentation of the archaic, is the source of value. Speculative profits are generated on the testimony of the ancients. The economy works by moving the coins, by handing them to another as *alter idem*, as *Neben-mensch* seated uncannily close at the table. Again, the intrinsic value, the goldenness of a golden line of Vergil, must be set aside from our consideration. It is the exchange value of the line and the use/*usus* to which it can be put as an authoritative citation that underwrites the *ratio* of symbolic accumulation and exchange.

43. Anonymous 2009:108–9.

44. Lacan 1977:43; Lacan 1966:251–52.

45. "[T]he predicate speculates in order to send itself the subject" (Derrida 1987:30). Compare Derrida 1987:131.

46. Contrast Quintilian's association of *consuetudo*, not *auctoritas*, with coinage at *Institutio oratoria* 1.6.1–3 as discussed earlier.

Much of this has already been said above. But the argument is expanded and modified here in order to note the supplement, the surplus value, found at Macrobius's literary table. This table is first a written table, the representation of a table. And second, it is also the already-written table of Gellius, a re-presentation of Gellius's table. And yet Gellius's table was itself written/already written, presented/re-presented. Therefore, even if Macrobius's discourse communicates nothing, *il représente l'existence de la communication*. Antiquarian representation in general communicates the existence of ancient communication, and it (re)presents representations past. Speculative profits are derived from testimonials. Macrobius has a doubly derivative relationship to the process: Macrobius puts back into circulation the sign of the signs exchanged by Gellius. The signature "Macrobius" testifies to the authenticity of this author, but this author presently dissolves into a mere coin collector.⁴⁷ He has collected among his coins, though, a number stamped with the bust of Aulus Gellius, famous coin collector. The captiousness and recursivity of this process make the notion of "plagiarism" a signifier without any clear signified in the world of antiquarianism: the zero-penny piece.⁴⁸

Of course, the number zero is an impossibility whose nonpresence can nevertheless be felt in the set of positive integers as soon as one performs certain basic operations even as *i* can be felt in the set of real numbers. For literary scholars the more familiar reference is to the Real, that which has been subtracted from the symbolic even as it enables the existence of the symbolic. Its remainder, *objet petit a*, is the sign that marks the disappearance, the sign that signs will be possible, that "I" can relate to "you/it."⁴⁹ In order to guarantee the economy of antiquarianism, all I need to subtract from it is the authenticity of the antiquarian author. The author-as-thing is lost. Instead of "the real author," we retain only a sign that marks his disappearance, the author-as-name rather than a sublime Name-of-the-Author. We should go back and repunctuate all the proper names of authors in this text, then, as "Macrobius," "Gellius," "Cato," . . . They circulate. They are circulated. Their notional value matters. Their concrete existence does not.

47. On signatures, see Derrida 1988. On deceptive signatures such as these, see Derrida 1987:146.

48. Compare the evacuation of "ambiguity" in the earlier discussion of *Noctes* 11.12.

49. Though not expressed in an explicitly Lacanian idiom, Porter's summary of Nietzsche on "modern" and Alexandrian philology fits well with this same schema: "[B]oth are driven by the impulse to recover the simultaneous object and cause of a common desire, an antiquity that is identified only when it has been lost" (Porter 2000:207–8).

“But the second is almost infinitely richer.” Says Avienus as he looks at Servius, *Viuamus ergo moribus praeteritis, uerbis praesentibus loquamur*.⁵⁰ Said Favorinus to a young man who is too archaic in his speech, “Live as one lived; speak as one speaks” (*Viue ergo moribus praeteritis, loquere uerbis praesentibus*).⁵¹ “The student of antiquarian knowledge constantly risks being swallowed by it and also becoming untimely: it happened to Varro, it happened to readers of Varro, and, yea verily, it could happen to you too.”⁵² *Mutatis mutandis*, *Saturnalia* 1.5.1–2 “is” *Noctes Atticae* 1.10. And what is it that must be changed? Only the names. The names, the *nomina*, are mere nouns. They are readily swapped for one another. The sentiments are true as cited and true because cited. But the name of the one who cites is the most fragile and evanescent of nouns/names, even/especially when it is a pronoun, an in-the-place-of-a-noun/name: “I,” “we,” or “you.” These are but linguistic shifters, empty placeholders adopted by each in turn. At the moment I am “I,” but for you I am “you.” As soon as you speak, you will be “I.”

Behold: this reminds me of a another passage in Macrobius. That passage reads, “Lo, I am reminded of that Pomponian verse . . .” *Venit ecce illius uersus Pomponiani in mentem . . . Saturnalia* 1.4.22 “is” *Noctes Atticae* 10.24.4. Both passages concern obscure words for past time: *diepristini*, *diecrastini*, and so on. Lo and behold: the mind of Macrobius. Into his head pops what popped into Gellius’s head. But what if what popped into Gellius’s head was a recollection not of Pomponius but of a commentary on Pomponius? This is the Julianus problem again. It is not exactly a problem, though, for if a citation of a passage pops into your head, it is as good as a direct recollection of that passage. A head filled with books does not differ from a head filled with books of books. And one’s own head is but a placeholder, a momentary repository for various fragments of the great archive. Your *caput* is but another chapter, your name but another entry in the *index nominum*.

“Live as one lived; speak as one speaks.” Present words, *uerbis praesentibus*, the words of today, the words of the text presently before “us,” though, are the words of yesterday; they are (Gellius’s [?!]) Favorinus’s (?!) words. The time is out of joint. Speak as they spoke and you will live as one lives, that is, as an antiquarian. But is such life, or is it “life” instead? How one lives and how one speaks become a muddle as the issue of who is speaking and when the words are spoken become unclear. Macrobius only

50. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.5.2.

51. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 1.10.4.

52. Anonymous 2009:176.

makes all the more clear the synchrony/allochrony of antiquarian discourse we observed in Gellius and the life of books/book of lives that ensued.⁵³

Caesar advises avoiding an uncommon word like a crag that can only sink one's linguistic ship.⁵⁴ But for his readers and the readers of these readers, it is the unfamiliar citation that becomes the *scopulus*. It is not just words themselves that are conventional, but so also are the words about words passed from hand to hand as worn-out *tesserae*. As a function of this very movement, though, a movement of circulation that takes place not just at a literal symposium but also across books and generations, Aulus Gellius authors the *Saturnalia* and so too does Macrobius author the *Noctes Atticae*.

Classiques (les): On est censé les connaître.

Critique: Est censé tout connaître, tout savoir, avoir tout lu, tout vu. Quand il vous déplait, l'appeler: Aristarque ou eunuque.

Éclectisme: Tonner contre, comme étant une philosophie immorale.

Érudition: La mépriser comme étant la marque d'un esprit étroit.

Innovation: Toujours dangereuse.

Latin: Langue naturelle de l'homme. Gâte l'écriture. Est seulement utile pour lire les inscriptions des fontaines publiques. Se méfier des citations en latin, elles cachent toujours quelque chose de leste.

Numismatique: A rapport aux hautes sciences. Inspire un immense respect.

Pratique: Supérieure à la théorie.

Romans: Pervertissent les masses. Sont moins immoraux en feuilleton qu'en volume. Seuls les romans historiques peuvent être tolérés parce qu'ils enseignent l'Histoire. Il y a des romans écrits avec la pointe d'un scalpel,—d'autres qui roulent sur la pointe d'une aiguille.

Saturnales: Fêtes du Directoire.

NB: The entry for *Faux-Monnayeurs*—"Travaillent toujours dans les Souterrains"—should be corrected. Macrobius's false *Nights* is forged/forged in broad daylight as he lucubrates at Gellius's table (of contents). I know, the space and time are all wrong in this image, but that only makes it the more right. Also, the currency is in fact authentic.

53. See Too 2000 for a detailed exploration of the paradoxes of "The Walking Library."

54. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.5.2 (= Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 1.10.4 [= Caesar, *De analogia* fr. 7]).

IV

Quod Holford-Streuens auctor Noctium Atticarum sit.

First, the title: *Aulus Gellius*. A book about an author. Who authored it? Holford-Streuens is the author of *Aulus Gellius/Aulus Gellius*. *Aulus Gellius* was, of course, the author of the *Noctes Atticae*. Thus, to offer a fuller description: Holford-Streuens is the author of *Aulus Gellius, the Author of the Noctes Atticae*.

Next, the dedication: *D.M. AVLI GELLI*. Holford-Streuens inscribes an epigram/epigraph on Gellius's tomb. Holford-Streuens's own book, though, is the tomb upon which this epigram is inscribed. He dedicates a poem to a Gellius who is both here and not here: *si tibi post cineres uititalia saecula curae . . .* Gellius, who collected verses in his book himself, posthumously gathers another verse that is set upon *Aulus Gellius/Aulus Gellius*. Note the vocative in line 2: *Aule*. See the vocative in line 12: *mi Gelli*, "my Gellius." *Quod ego Holford-Streuens scripserim, tu Aule, adsis*.

Line 3 of the poem: "Please, I beg of you, look kindly upon the one who brings you these small little gifts/favors, I who studied to know you and your writings together."⁵⁵ The narrator of these verses, we will call him Holford-Streuens for convenience's sake, studied to know two things at one and the same time: Gellius and the writings of Gellius. But are these two things?

There is much to admire in the verses: the word order and word choice are precisely executed. We wonder why it is a plural noun: *munuscula* and not *munusculum*. Please do not tell me that Holford-Streuens was laboring to fit the meter. Instead the book *Aulus Gellius* is more than one *munusculum*: it is, of itself, a plurality. One way of specifying this plurality would be to declare that it is both (1) *Aulus Gellius* and (2) *Aulus Gellius*. But according to the logic of the-book-is-the-man, this is a recursive declaration: it can be rewritten as (1) *Aulus Gellius* and (2) *Aulus Gellius* and *Aulus Gellius*. This can itself be rewritten as . . .

The book is a collection of little offerings. Hence the plural. It is not, then, a unity: the chapters aggregate without converging. We have particles of knowledge, but, paradoxically, no *congeries/aceruus/σῶρος* as such. Though Holford-Streuens has done his duty by Gellius and performed/offered his *munus*, he has also only done a bit of his duty by Gellius: the

55. *haec faueas, oro, munuscula parua ferenti, | noscere qui studui scriptaque teque simul* (Holford-Streuens 1988). The dedication page is unnumbered, but we can call it "vii" if we wish.

munus is diminutive. In fact, it piles up its own tininess: *parua* is heaped upon its smallness so as to make it the smaller. The pile shrinks as it grows.

Caesar appears only to disappear: “But while Caesar too has given way to the eternal shades | that night has not yet o’erwhelmed your *Nights*.”⁵⁶ The *Nights* vanquish the night. Caesar is a character in those *Nights*. There he is only a shadow of himself. Here in the *Aulus* he is but the shade of a shade, a ghost’s ghost. How to rage against the dying of the light? Cry out, Goethe, in Faustian tones, “More *Nights*!”

Lines 10–11: *quod legeris gratum est; quod amaris num tibi mirum, | quo nihil commodius candidiusque nihil?* “That you are read is pleasing. Is it any wonder, though, that you are loved? | Nothing is more agreeable [advantageous!], nothing more resplendent than you.” There is an implied subject of the pleasure here: “you.” You enjoy being read. But we can call this as well “being-read,” the being that comes of being read. You enjoy the being that (my) reading bestows on you. We can also supply *mihi* for *gratum est*: it pleases me that you are read. I love beholding my beloved beheld, beheld, in particular, in the mirror of *Aulus Gellius*. “That I am read, that my *Aulus Gellius* is read, this is pleasing to me.” The narrator and his beloved share a complex relationship in this elegy. Cf. Propertius 4.7: *Sunt aliquid Manes: letum non omnia finit, . . . Eosdem . . . Eosdem . . .* To know Gellius is at one and the same time to write Gellius/*Gellius*, to write his writings back to/for him/his ghost.⁵⁷ Gellius’s epitaph is ghostwritten by Holford-Strevens, the son who takes dictation from his father’s shade. Once again, *zweimal ist immer, identidem*: the time is out of joint.

Holford-Strevens did not want to compose another *Noctes*—which is easy—but *the Noctes itself*. He dedicated his scruples and his sleepless nights to repeating an already extant book in an alien tongue. It is a revelation to compare Holford-Strevens’s *Noctes Atticae* with Gellius’s, to compare Holford-Strevens’s *Aulus Gellius* with Aulus Gellius’s. It is not in vain that eighteen hundred years have gone by, filled with exceedingly complex events. Among them, to mention only one, is the *Noctes* itself.

Above, here, and below I am generally uncharitable to historicist thought. By historicism I mean the view that historical periods should be studied without imposing anachronistic categories of evaluation. It will rightly be objected that contemporary historiography is much richer and more complex than I intimate. That is true. My real aim, though, is a critique of the critique of anachronism and an exploration of the antiquarian reconfiguration

56. Lines 7–8: *sed cum perpetuis Caesar quoque cesserit umbris, | nondum nox Noctes obruit illa tuas.*

57. Compare Henderson 2000:294 on Plato/*Plato, et alii/cetera*.

of time. “At the same time as” antiquarianism disrupts historicist chronology, its mode of putting texts together, that is, the antiquarian version of “context,” similarly troubles the notion of context on which vulgar historicist thought relies. And what particularly interests me in this regard is a certain tendency for contemporary historicist approaches to antiquity to in fact participate in antiquarian modes of thought. Nevertheless, the most radical possibilities of that thought—there are, of course, thoroughly unradical ones as well—tend not to be entertained.

Gellius may herald the arrival of his disparate text, but texts on Gellius, including the present one, immediately refuse that *disparilitas* in the name of some putative unity. “Gellius” is one of those unities, the author of the text. Various cultural and historical unities once conjured also dispel the *Gespenst* of the disparate: the world of scholars, the Antonine age, the Second Sophistic,⁵⁸ the empire. Despite the rough edges to the *Noctes*, then, nothing is in fact unexpected: “Of course, we see an account of the size of Hercules’ foot; this is the sort of thing such a man at such a time discussed.” Everything is typical: all of the coins are stamped with the same face.⁵⁹ The time, it is back in joint.

Holford-Strevens’s *Aulus Gellius* writes Aulus Gellius for modern readers. The title is unambiguous. The table of contents promises as much: “Part I. The Man and His Book.” “Part II. Praeceptors and Acquaintances.” “Part III. Scholarship and Study.” Chapter 1 is “Life and Dates.” Chapter 2 is “Composition and Purpose.” The whole book is thoroughly sensible. It is filled with facts and citations. Taken in its own terms, the *Aulus Gellius* is an excellent text. At issue, though, are these very terms, terms that are not just “its own.” They “typify” the spirit of our own age, an age that does not believe in ghosts or in ghostwriting even if it does still believe in coin collecting.

Holford-Strevens’s account of *usus* is impeccable. In fact, the account of *usus* threatens to swallow the whole of the *Aulus Gellius*. Aulus Gellius’s *Noctes Atticae* is used as a repository of endless citations, all of which point back to Aulus Gellius. The *Noctes Atticae* author a sense of Aulus Gellius. Holford-Strevens’s *Aulus Gellius* reorders the *Noctes Atticae* so as to reveal the author, even as that same author is written by his own text. And although

58. Goldhill 2001:14–15 flags the crisis of this (in)coherent concept in his introduction to a volume that “sets an agenda” for its exploration. Compare Anderson 1990.

59. “[T]he perverse agent of University discourse disavows that there was the event of an act in the first place—with his chain of knowledge, he wants to reduce the consequence of the act to just another thing that can be explained away as part of the normal run of things” (Žižek 1999:165).

the author is a notion that grounds the sense of the unity of the text, it is in fact the unity of the text's practices that expose the true unity of the all-too-human author.⁶⁰ The *Aulus Gellius* takes on the shape of a vast *index rerum* whose role is to make known, reveal, disclose, and lay information against (*indicare*) Aulus Gellius by means of the *Noctes*.

Holford-Strevens maintains a rigid distinction between the logic of authors and the logic of texts: "What Gellius says is no guide to what he does."⁶¹ What Gellius did, that is, the penning of the *Noctes*, is a truer indication/*indicium* of who he is than anything he might say of himself in the text he penned. Holford-Strevens thus observes the narratological distinction between author and narrator and character. In fact, he enforces it.

The second part of the *Aulus Gellius*, "Praeceptors and Acquaintances," regularly distinguishes between the figures represented in the *Noctes* and their historical reality. This same "Part" of the whole of the *Aulus Gellius* assembles a variety of portraits of men who were not Gellius. The *disparilitas* multiplies. We are unlikely to perceive it as such, though, given that each face added to the gallery rounds out the sense of context for Gellius's text. The chorus of the learned sing harmoniously, and this unified polyphony helps us appreciate that one voice, Gellius, that we have decided to listen for among the mass. *Sed uariarum rerum disparilitas, auctoribus diuersa, confusa temporibus, ita in quoddam digesta corpus est.* But for the *confusa temporibus*, we recognize in the contextualist method the same sort of elaborate weaving together as Macrobius announced in his *Saturnalia*.

The role of *auctoritas* is much more sparing in *Aulus Gellius* than in Aulus Gellius. Even as Holford-Strevens appreciates the authority of the community of learned men and duly footnotes and registers in his bibliography the words of other postclassical scholars, he nevertheless avoids explicitly raising *auctoritas* as a criterion for making judgments in his own text. In fact, the discourse of the *Aulus Gellius*, like just about any rigorous post-Enlightenment work, derives its authority specifically from its refusal to embrace authority. Holford-Strevens will always choose an authoritative citation rather than authority itself, *usus* as *auctoritas* rather than *auctoritas* pure and simple. Only ancients who actually "got things right" are praised. Their authority is but a function of their accuracy and always liable to reevaluation: the authority of the proper name has vanished. In fact,

60. "A modern reader, noting Gellius' repeated warnings against too deep a study of physics and logic, might suspect that he recognized in himself an unhealthy interest in silly tales and useless knowledge; but Romans should not be lightly credited with self-awareness" (Holford-Strevens 1988:31).

61. Holford-Strevens 1988:26.

Holford-Strevens is so little a partisan of the heroism of the name-of-the-grammarian that he spends a great deal of time and energy running down Aulus Gellius himself. Gellius's limitations and failures are ruthlessly cataloged in the *Aulus Gellius*. The final chapter, "Weak Spots and Blind Spots," is in many ways superfluous. To the extent that there is any one authoritative grammarian present in the text, this figure is only indirectly present; it is "Holford-Strevens," the one man who always seems to get things right throughout the book. Whether we confuse this figure with Holford-Strevens is another affair: I am not writing a full-blown *Holford-Strevens* in the wake of reading the *Aulus Gellius*. "Part I. The Man and His Book." "Part II. Praeceptors and Acquaintances." "Part III. Scholarship and Study." . . .

The epilogue to the *Aulus Gellius* is as intriguing as the epigram. Both summarize major interpretive issues for the text as a whole, the one in verse and in advance, the other in prose and somewhat belatedly. In this epilogue Holford-Strevens elaborately qualifies his Gellius/*Gellius*: there is nothing exceptional about him/it either for good or for ill. There is, in fact, little to get passionate about. Accordingly, the epilogue, unlike the quasi-amatory epigram, is something of an unlove letter. This is a rhapsody on the absence of qualities that provoke passion:

His grammatical discussions, though fallible, display intelligence; and in grammar as in criticism, he often appears to greater advantage than the professionals. He is no philosopher, but no more unphilosophical than most of his, and our, contemporaries; he is no historian, but history was no longer being written except in Greek. His knowledge of that language and its literature, adequate by the standards of his age, is less than may be found in the late Republic; but it has rarely been his students' strongest suit. He has an interest, albeit superficial, in law and medicine; he is a skillful narrator with no small facility for invention; he can express his personal affection without embarrassing even an English reader; his laudatory superlatives are no more monotonous than Cicero's; his confessedly inexhaustive expositions are successfully designed to stimulate our own researches. Few among the learned, if they attempted to write in Gellius' vein, could produce so attractive or wide-ranging a miscellany.⁶²

The epilogue continues in this vein. To the extent that this is a love letter, it is one written to a spouse of many years, of decades even. There is no great passion here, only respect. And even the respect is tempered by a

62. Holford-Strevens 1988:237.

familiarity that has often fought against—and not always successfully—contempt. “He is not X, but . . .” But, it turns out, almost nobody is/was “X.” Even Cicero gets knocked down a peg or two. Holford-Strevens four times invokes “today”: our (likely) want of philosophy, our (likely) shoddy Greek, our (likely) (English) embarrassment in the face of affection, our own (actual) researches. Middling modernity is in every way a good match for this middling man of the past.

Nevertheless, we find *Sturm und Drang* as the epilogue draws to its close. This then gives way to a humble pathos. *Faust* is doubly evoked, first Wagner’s, next Goethe’s.⁶³ “[B]ut since when has it been a sin for a scholar to be warmed on winter nights by what he reads, and on unrolling a noble manuscript to feel that all heaven has come down to him?” *Pecca fortiter* . . . Next a striking image of a dead, living, doomed-to-die tree (of knowledge). Then a defense pleaded before and a prosecution launched against the average man of today. Then, “In an age with less respect for learning than the second century, we should not throw stones from our glass house, nor assail our ancient colleague in displaced self-hatred. For all his limitations, he is a delightful companion, full of charm and not without intelligence.”⁶⁴ Gellius, us/one of us.⁶⁵ The synchrony of the community of learning returns to our pages. Gellius, the long-time companion. Gellius, worthy of a respect that is too judicious to mistake itself for love.

“How many scholars’ work, ancient or modern, can be read for pleasure? Jealousy, masked in austerity, may disapprove; but still he defies his traducers as once he defied ‘the gracelessness and envy of certain ill-educated persons,’ while bidding the rest of us to join in his festival of learning.”⁶⁶ Gellius ghostwrites the epilogue of the *Aulus Gellius*, then. Gellius wrote it when he wrote his own prologue. He defied unknown foes; he told the vulgar herd to depart. Only gentle and genteel symposiasts remain, each offering his own contribution to the *symbola*.

Gellius is to be read with pleasure. Despite the qualifications and detraction everywhere else in the text and in the epilogue, Holford-Strevens insists on pleasure. Those who deny pleasure are merely jealous. The ethics of scholarship are at stake here: what are its pleasures? The unnamed other scholars whom Holford-Strevens denounces apparently wanted to give

63. Holford-Strevens 1988:238.

64. Holford-Strevens 1988:238–39.

65. Compare Baldwin 1975:49: “Nor should we be quick to sneer at antiquarianism. To see Aulus Gellius as the symptom of an intellectual disease hardly befits the classical scholar. The *Noctes Atticae* resemble nothing so much as the pages of a learned journal.”

66. Holford-Strevens 1988:238.

pleasure but could not, and thus they denounced the pleasure that Gellius offers. Instead, they threw stones from their glass houses. They hated themselves as they reveled in hating Gellius. Did Holford-Strevens give pleasure?

Gellius promised that the *Noctes Atticae* was his life. This book, the *Aulus Gellius*, has not just written Gellius's life, but it also has an epilogue, a sort of febrile ethical supplement. This supplement praises/blames the life of Holford-Strevens and the life of all his imaginary contemporaries. This ethical crisis of the pleasures of the text(s) arises as a function of the distance from and identity with the *Noctes Atticae*. This question of identity and difference cannot be resolved, though. Note what happens when we draw up the following analogy: Holford-Strevens is to Aulus Gellius as the *Aulus Gellius* is to the *Noctes Atticae*. The gap between Aulus Gellius and *Aulus Gellius* guards the analogy against total collapse and a situation where Holford-Strevens is Aulus Gellius is the *Aulus Gellius* is the *Noctes Atticae*. It is precisely in measure as Holford-Strevens's own book has failed to capture Gellius that it also justifies its own "objectivity," its detachment from Gellius, and hence its right to comment on him even as such commentary is always errant. If the *Aulus Gellius* were the perfect book of Gellius's life, it would be both the perfect book of Holford-Strevens's own life and it would be the *Noctes Atticae* itself. The essence of Gellius/the *Noctes* is precisely what is missing from the *Aulus Gellius*. And it is because it is missing that we can trust the authority of the *Aulus Gellius*. But the ghost of Gellius returns as revenant in the end to pen a supplemental chapter much as it penned its own epigram/epitaph.

V

Quod Holford-Streuens Aulum Gellium iterum ediderit.

No sooner did I finish writing about the *Aulus Gellius* than I discovered that there was another and new *Aulus Gellius* to be read. Holford-Strevens had just published *Aulus Gellius: An Antonine Scholar and His Achievement*. I would need, then, to revise significantly. Or would I? *Aulus Gellius: An Antonine Scholar and His Achievement* is more or less the same book as was *Aulus Gellius*. *Alter idem*. *Alter identidem*. *Zweimal ist immer*. And so forth.

The press has changed. The edition is designated as revised. The bibliography is updated. Fourteen years have passed. The dedication and its epigram remain the same. The original preface returns accompanied by a "Preface to the Revised Edition." The epilogue is altered by two additional clauses: we are assured that Gellius's display of learning is for our good rather than his glory; we are made all the more mindful of the dark

Teutonic subtext of the epilogue by a reference to the *Reichsgründung*.⁶⁷ Notes have been augmented. A page of Renaissance appreciations of Gellius is new.⁶⁸ New as well is the excursus on Gellius and Apuleius. The chapter “Weak Spots and Blind Spots” has been retitled “Other Values and Interests, Weak Spots, and Blind Spots.” The old appendix “Editions and Translations” has become “The Transmission and Publication of the *Attic Nights*.” It is now accompanied by an appendix titled “Archaism and Atticism.”

The “Preface to the Revised Edition” guides us to the changes. None of them is substantive. That is, perhaps, the point of both the preface and the revenant text itself. By and large, the new preface is a defense of the methods of the old edition and a promise that in some few places specific items have been altered. The tone is charmingly trenchant throughout: *Non, je ne regrette rien*.

Holford-Strevens rewrites Gellius the rewriter; the *Gellius* is rewritten. Holford-Strevens plays Macrobius to his own Gellius; the book is the same, but different. In his new preface Holford-Strevens also rewrites the character “Holford-Strevens” from his earlier text. This new-but-old “Holford-Strevens” notes that prefaces are wont to be subjected to deconstruction.⁶⁹ Does Holford-Strevens/“Holford-Strevens”/*Holford-Strevens* intimate that his rewrite is about to get rewritten? Has he already read my *Nox*? Has he already written it? Am I merely rewriting the rewritten? Holford-Strevens seems to understand that postmodernism might in fact pick up on antiquarian themes, even as he has little patience for such behavior.⁷⁰ Abuse of theoretical approaches as only so much “jargon” is plentiful in the *Gellius Alter*. Perhaps both the antiquarians and the postmoderns are but forms without any real contents, mere manners as well as unintentional comedies thereof. We are to imagine the habits of some twenty-first-century scholars in the same sense as we approach Gellius: He was an Antonine. They are of their age. *Ein Gespenst ist in Europa umgegangen*. Theory is dead, they say. Its spirit, alas, lives on. And yet what if that spirit were itself somehow Gellian?

VI

Quot scriptores, tot auctores Noctium Atticarum sint.

A festival of learning: the phrase describes the *Noctes Atticae*. It also serves as something of a translation for that curious institution, the Festschrift. If

67. These are Holford-Strevens 2003:330 and 331 respectively.

68. Holford-Strevens 2003:vi.

69. Holford-Strevens 2003:xii.

70. See Holford-Strevens 2003:363, where a parallel is noted.

the *Noctes Atticae* is a “party out of bounds,” a disparate agglomeration of fêtes that is so disparate that it even accumulates nonparties into its *corpus*, then the Festschrift equivalent of this situation is undoubtedly the ANRW, the *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*. What started as a Festschrift now fills an entire set of bookshelves and shows no sign of stopping: a self-contained world of books that forever rises and shows no sign of imagining its own decline.

I wish to review three pieces found in the jaunty pages of the ANRW. At the end of the second “partial volume” of the thirty-fourth volume of the second part of the ANRW, three essays on Aulus Gellius appear, one by G. Anderson, one by D. W. T. Vessey, and one by M. Henry.⁷¹ The questions of authorship, the author, and who writes whom are provoked by each of them. We can only do them a glancing (in)justice, though.

The essay of Madeline Henry offers the *Noctes* done small. If Holford-Strevens rewrote the *Noctes* as “Gellius and The World of the *Noctes*,” then Henry has held closer to her original. Or conversely, the original has altered itself less in order to generate Henry’s essay. After roughly three pages of introduction, much of which is bulk citation of Gellius’s own introduction, Henry goes on to produce a thematic summary of the contents of each of Gellius’s twenty books. Much as the *Noctes* itself, Henry’s essay just ends. There is no conclusion.

Henry’s introduction argues that any reading of Gellius that “attempts to detect patterns of thought or preoccupations of its writer cannot do more than show the *idées fixes* of Aulus and their relationship to one another and the whole.”⁷² We read for patterns, then. The process is helped by Gellius’s own randomness: this promises “perhaps a more authentic way” of knowing the man through his work than might be possible in the case of “some more artful compiler.” The “propinquities, adjacencies and proximities” of the *Noctes* offer “a key to Gellius.”⁷³

I am obviously sympathetic to the approach: a thematic reading of the *Noctes* has much to offer. But notice the specific sacrifice that comes with this gain. The *Noctes* tell a tale on their author as they lay damning testimony against him (*indicare*): Gellius’s own incompetence enables the reading itself. A fool lurks at the heart of the labyrinth. Henry’s invocation of New Historicism allows her to turn the text into a context that reveals the author for who/what he is,⁷⁴ but she nevertheless retains the idea of an

71. Anderson 1994; Vessey 1994; and Henry 1994.

72. Henry 1994:1919.

73. Henry 1994:1919. Compare and contrast Foucault 1973:xxiv.

74. Henry 1994:1919n1.

author who produced a text, and a text that reveals an author and his worldly interests. The problematic relationship between text and author that is staged by and within the *Noctes* retreats to the background.

Henry produces interesting accounts of the twenty books. It is a useful exercise: try to overcome the *disparilitas* of the *Noctes* by appealing to the text as found and ordered. The basic meta-ordering principle is "Gellius." "Gellius" can then be indexed via "his interests." These interests become a set of major themes and motifs that Henry observes in the *Noctes*: these are order itself, boundaries, oppositions, bodies. The list is good and useful. But it comes at a price: some things have to be left off it, and the books of the *Noctes* can come to seem more orderly than they are if read through. Furthermore, Henry's Gellius seems a bit more interested in women and gender than another scholar's Gellius might be. Do we see her preoccupations here? The question is not so much unfair—well, it is that, too—as it is inevitable: Henry's mode of reading Gellius, if "converted" via the logic of *reciproca*/ἀντιστρέφοντα arguments, yields a sense of an author of this essay that offers "a key to herself" via her reading of Gellius's reading. History, biography, context, truth: these are all authoritatively conjured by Henry's New Historicism as she writes/rewrites the *Noctes*. Twenty books done in roughly twenty pages. The excerpted is excerpted. Or course, the *Noctes* are self-excerpting as we have seen above. The forbidden remainder, though, in Henry's essay is the same as that in Holford-Strevens's book: the author "proper," the modern author who writes (about) Gellius. We are nowhere invited to ask about Henry and her predilections. We are not invited to wonder why Holford-Strevens finds reading Gellius to be Faustian. And yet both commentaries on Gellius's commentaries leave us wondering if they are not in some measure simultaneously commentaries on themselves. Such a situation deprives them of their "objectivity" given that "the commentator" is both the subject and the object here, both the author of *commentarii* and the thing whose ghostly presence is sought out within, before, and beyond the *commentarii*.

Quot grammatici, tot Gellii. As many as are the grammarians, so many are the Gelliuses. The *Noctes*, though, despite its fundamental disparity, remains a unity, a *corpus* that testifies to the *animus* of the man who wrote it. The problem is to deduce from this body the invisible soul of the author. For every textual effect, there is an authorial cause. It may or may not be intended. Everyone agrees that Gellius writes a miscellany, but miscellaneous portraits of Gellius emerge in the wake of this truism. Henry has one Gellius, Holford-Strevens another. Anderson offers a third.

Graham Anderson's title, "Aulus Gellius: A Miscellanist and His World," indicates the same general conceit that underlies the approaches of Henry and Holford-Strevens: the *Noctes* is an *index* to the contents designated by the *nomen* Gellius. However, the *Noctes* itself as a text must be put into context. The book, the man, the world: the last two explain the first even as the first bears witness to them. The trinity are never to be thought separately. Impiety!

Anderson begins, though, by noting that the *Noctes* is generative of scholarship on the *Noctes*. It is not so much a neutral object as a provocateur, an incitement to erudition. "The scholar who wishes to come to terms with Gellius has a number of problems to overcome. The 'Noctes Atticae' is a work of encyclopaedic range: its author seldom pursues a subject as far as he might, his students have to stretch their expertise from an unusually detailed understanding of the activities of the *grammaticus* through conventional history and philosophy to paradoxography or optics—against a background of Second Century social and cultural conventions."⁷⁵ We come to terms with Gellius by coming to terms with the *Noctes*. This requires coming to terms with the contents of the *Noctes*. It also always entails going beyond both the author and the *Noctes*: the author stops short, the students push on; the text sits in the foreground, the cultural background requires further attention. We have to become "more Gellius than Gellius" if we are to read him successfully. Only the son who surpasses his father can know him. These are the Oedipal children of the book.

Anderson's second move, though, is even more striking: he turns to one who is already more Gellius than Gellius and engages him in a bit of table talk of the More-than-Gellii. Anderson's second paragraph reads, then, "The present treatment is prompted by the latest major contribution, the book-length study by Holford-Strevens; what follows represents a user's first reaction to an obviously standard work; not the least of its merits is the stimulus to further study it is likely to provoke from those whose perspective on the Early Empire is considerably different from Holford-Strevens' own."⁷⁶ Holford-Strevens "is" Gellius in this second paragraph. The encyclopedic *Noctes* has been replaced by the "obviously standard" *Aulus Gellius*. The student who moments before was reading the one text is now "using" the other: *usus uenit*. The fight over context is now an issue of whether the *Aulus Gellius* betrays a blindness to the workings of the Antonine age even as it attempts to reveal them.

75. Anderson 1994:1834.

76. Anderson 1994:1834–35.

Anderson's essay is filled with a variety of interesting and useful observations, and users of it will likely react favorably. However, I am obviously most interested in this opening gambit whereby it becomes both a piece about the *Noctes* and a reaction to the *Aulus Gellius*. It is not a review. It is not a critique. It is merely a response. However, its structure specifically mirrors that of the *Aulus Gellius*. Section 1 of Anderson's essay is "The Author and His Work." Part 1 of Holford-Strevens's book was "The Man and His Book." Anderson's second section, "Preoccupations of a Miscellanist," has four subsections that correspond fairly closely to Holford-Strevens's part 3, "Scholarship and Study," and its eight chapters. Anderson's third section, "Some People in Gellius," matches up with Holford-Strevens's second part, "Praeceptors and Acquaintances."

Ecce uenit in mentem . . . Anderson comes across as a Macrobius to Holford-Strevens's Gellius: Graham Anderson, author of the *Aulus Gellius*. Anderson supplements Holford-Strevens's supplementary text, and the essay "feels" much like a miniature *Aulus Gellius*. One can compare Henry's miniature *Noctes Atticae*. And as in the case of Henry, when Anderson finishes with a section titled "Engaging but Elusive: Towards a Personality for Gellius," some of the descriptions of Gellius produce the uncanny sensation that we are reading of an elusive self seen in the mirror.

"Almost . . ." The word "almost" has an odd status in the final pages of Anderson's essay as he tries to put a "human face" on Gellius, who did the same for the study of the Latin language.⁷⁷ Gellius's appetite for facts is "almost indiscriminate," and it is "almost embarrassing" to contemplate the list of tedious topics Gellius investigated even though he ought to have known better.⁷⁸ However, Anderson lists as his examples of roads best not taken topics that Gellius did not, in fact, pursue: "The name of the first grammaticus, the reason for Homer's knowing rose-oil but not roses . . ."⁷⁹ Anderson is evoking *Noctes Atticae* 14.6. But it will be remembered that that list of topics was the table of contents of the book that Gellius would not insert into his own book. Said Gellius, "My work is not that." Anderson, though, in his "almost indiscriminate" reading of Gellius's "almost embarrassing" accumulation of knowledge sweeps up those same refused contents as he makes his own declaration. Says Anderson, "My work is not that."⁸⁰

77. Anderson 1994:1860.

78. Anderson 1994:1858.

79. Anderson 1994:1858. The ellipsis is mine, but Anderson is about to ellipse his own list.

80. RICA A ***: . . . Quand un homme n'a rien à dire de nouveau, que ne se tait-il? Qu'a-t-on affaire de ces doubles emplois? Mais je veux donner un nouvel ordre. Vous êtes un habile homme: c'est-à-dire que vous venez dans ma bibliothèque et vous mettez en bas

The human face Anderson sets upon himself turns out to be nothing so much as a death mask of Gellius.

D. W. T. Vessey begins his “Aulus Gellius and the Cult of the Past” auspiciously. He opens with an antiquarian account of the word “archaism”: “According to ‘Le Grand Larousse’ (I, 535), «*archaïsme*» first appeared in the French language in 1659 and the epithet «*archaïque*» in 1776. In English, the earliest citation of ‘archaism’ provided by ‘The Oxford English Dictionary’ (I, 431) dates from 1612, of ‘archaic’ from 1832. In LSJ, ἀρχαϊσμός has only a shadowy existence and is certainly never attached to a mode or movement. TLL’s entry, s.v. *archaismos* (II, 459.19–29), is limited to examples from Servius, where he classifies certain words and usages in Vergil. It was not until the nineteenth century that ‘archaism’ was applied to trends and schools in art and literature.”⁸¹ Vessey offers, then, an antiquarian inquiry into the question of archaism itself.⁸² The word is, in the sense that one uses it today, but a latecomer. Vessey’s argument is learned, trenchant, witty, and ironic. The piece as a whole is routinely enlightening.

It will come as no surprise, though, that I am going to talk about ghost-writing again. First, the essay displays a *disparilitas* of its own. Its introductory segment on “archaism” resumes issues most thoroughly covered by Marache. The account of *archaïsme*, a word whose geography and chronology come as something of a surprise, puts antiquarians of antiquarianism in mind of Marache from the start. To those who know Marache’s book, this first portion of Vessey’s essay might be described as a user’s reaction to a standard work, that is, to Marache 1952. The second section of the essay argues of the *Noctes*: “Each section is its own world, its own *praxis*.”⁸³ The argument is to a certain extent convertible: Vessey’s sections are not necessarily strongly linked. That is, how did we get from the history of the word archaism to textual architecture?

Vessey offers specimens of Gellius’s approach: specimens of a man who gathered specimens. “What better to provide a specimen of Gellius’ approach than his recasting of a tale from Cato the Censor? (Remembering always that Cato is a creature in a Gellian domain and subject to

les livres qui sont en haut, et en haut ceux qui sont en bas: vous avez fait un chef d’oeuvre. Je t’écris sur ce sujet, *** , parce que je suis outré d’un livre que je viens de quitter, qui est si gros qu’il semblait contenir la science universelle; mais il m’a rompu la tête sans m’avoir rien appris. Adieu. [Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, Lettre 66.—Ed.]

81. Vessey 1994:1864.

82. Compare Most 1989, which is more specifically focused on the scholarly construction of this notion within classical studies. The essay can thus be compared to the work of Porter.

83. Vessey 1994:1868. The issue returns in his conclusion (Vessey 1994:1914–15).

metempsychosis on Gellian terms.)”⁸⁴ Vessey too, then, recognizes the revenant quality of antiquarianism: parenthetically subjoined, we read a vital ghost story, a story of the out-of-joint vitality of antiquarian praxis itself.

In the middle of Vessey’s essay we find a close reading of Gellius’s preface. I’m jealous as a bested rival: not only does his approach ghostwrite my own *Praefatio Gellii*, but it surpasses my perversity. There is something very satisfying in relegating the beginning to the middle, to displace so thoroughly the *praefatio Gellii* with a *praefatio auctoris* and its true tale of bogus *archaïsme*. Similarly clever is the penultimate section, “Last Words.” The final section of all, “Qui scire vult legat,” keeps the Gellian ball rolling in a manner worthy of the author *ipsissimus*: to read a reading is to desire to read yet more. Back to the original, then: Gellius the derivative.

VII

Quod egomet auctor Noctium Atticarum sim.

Tu quoque! “Naturally.”

I am but the last in a long line of rewriters of Gellius. *Scriptio* becomes a rescript, an imperious gesture that attempts to write back to the author, to write him into his place. And yet the author of a metadiscourse about Gellius has always already been inscribed by Gellius himself, or, rather, by the *Noctes* itself. For it is the disparate quality of the *Noctes* that simultaneously enables and provokes the desire to find and fix the author as a singularity.

I have undone the disparity. I produce a unity. I constantly write Gellius/“Gellius.” I tell a lot of tall tales about this Gellius of mine. I strive—note the insertion of agency and intention—to depict a textual effect that is regularly mistaken for the cause of the text. But Gellius is neither the one nor the other. To the extent that he exists, he “is” both cause and effect.

There is a strong tendency in the contemporary scholarly milieu to rewrite the *Noctes* according to a specific contemporary *ratio*. This *ratio* naturally claims to aim at what is essential about Gellius. At the price of self-refutation—not a problem for an antiquarian!—I offer a “context” and a “spirit of the age.” I will capriciously weave together random (non)representative threads in order to produce a sense of a clearly bogus unity, namely, the classical scholarship of today. I assemble disparate objects and disparate times to yield the *community* and the *contemporary*. Let me, then, once again caricature the contemporary technique as follows: the *Noctes*

84. Vessey 1994:1873.

has subtracted from it Gellius, author of the *Noctes*; then the world of the second century “causes” in a loose and ambiguous sense both Gellius and the *Noctes*. Gellius becomes a typical antiquarian; the *Noctes* a representative text. The two are species/specimens to be found under the heading/*capitulum* “The Antonine Age.”

Let us attempt to rewrite the story of the origin of species and the logic of *Herkunft* into a bibliographic idiom. And that, “I” argue, is the appropriate shift to make: rather than history as efficient cause or culture as final cause or even genre as exemplary cause, “we” need to think through the logic of texts themselves. And this logic is not just internal to those texts. What if, then, heterogeneity and alterity were to be described less as functions of the transcendental metaphysics of time and its passage than as artifacts of a logic of textuality itself?

The antiquarian bibliophile opens up a sort of pataphysics that yields a variety of imaginary deformations of the “real” relations between life and the world.⁸⁵ Proximate causes become remote, remote ones proximate. The extrinsic becomes intrinsic, the intrinsic extrinsic. Even for those who believe in getting back to the *realia*, perhaps especially for such, the logic of the archive yields a labyrinth that must be traversed via the most delicate of threads in order to at last arrive at that monster, the Thing Itself.

As a concrete historical individual, the antiquarian author “dies” in the name of the authorization of the archive itself. If we attend to narratological issues rather than historical or biographical ones as we read a text like the *Noctes*, we will observe that the image of the author, the author-archivist as character in the text, supplants the biological author throughout. Macrobius was accordingly a visionary: by eliminating the name of Gellius from his Gellian rewrite, he only took a latent possibility to an extreme end. Gellius the character in the *Noctes*, the antiquarian subject collected by antiquarianism itself, is self-subtracting: he seldom speaks; he constantly records. One need only go a step further and simply delete the word “Gellius” from the text. The remainder we can designate as “antiquarianism itself,” even as this thing-in-itself is not a possible object of cognition inasmuch as we, as subjects, cannot really imagine an autonomous logic of *logos*-circulation without imagining as well agents who circulate.

85. We can compare the problem of books and biography when it comes to approaching that bibliophile named Lucian. Bompaigne 1958 sees bookishness everywhere. Panagopoulos 1984 sees a concrete life behind the books. Branham 1989 attempts to overcome the dichotomy. Readers of the *Somnium* thus have to ask themselves if they are not dreaming when they think they have just met Lucian. Undecidability between true and false regularly appears to be the (dis)order of the day in Lucian.

The knowledge contained within the Gellian archive is not an archive in itself. His archive pointedly also includes the archivist within itself. This figure, this handmaiden/*menina* of knowledge, must be painted onto the canvas. The knower lives and is lived by knowledge. Knowledge is specifically dialogic (διαλέγεσθαι, again). We behold the tables (of contents), and we overhear the banter of book talkers and talking books. The ancient antiquarian subject may be a hybrid, but this hybridity nevertheless means that “humanity” is constantly retained, if only as an image, within the functioning of archival logic itself.

Contemporary knowledge retains “the subject,” but only in a paradoxical manner. The subject is always and only the object of knowledge: who was Gellius, really? This subject, Gellius, the object of our research is subjected to or the subject of forces that pointedly exclude the domain of archival knowledge itself: “history” and “culture” and “context.” The demand for “objectivity” on the part of the contemporary researcher thus yields a proliferation of objects, including and especially “the historical subject.”⁸⁶ The chimera of the archival subject vanishes.

However, the demand for objectivity can also produce unexpected species of Gellianism as a consequence. The contemporary researcher is self-subtracting from his or her text. This is a feature of objective historical knowledge. However, Gellius too knows how to step into the background, even if ultimately one is not meant to forget the archivist. Hence the importance of Holford-Strevens’s epigraph and epilogue: “Holford-Strevens” appears in them. He is somewhat Gellian in his disappearance in the body of the *Gellius*, perhaps, but he is most truly Gellian in his reappearance at its close, when the ghostly image of a self and of its Faustian pact is conjured for us. But for this ghostly coda to the *Gellius*, our other texts on Gellius are all written by “Anonymous.”

The “subject of knowledge” is “properly” but the appendix of knowledge, knowledge’s tacked-on epilogue. “Aulus Gellius and the Cult of the Past” is not true because D. T. W. Vessey wrote it;⁸⁷ it is true because it evinces the formal properties of contemporary knowledge, specifically, the deauthorization of the figure of the knower in the face of empirical fact: *usus* is king; *ratio* his law. *Auctoritas* accordingly exists only within the figure

86. Compare the discussion of the subjectivism/objectivism antithesis in the preface of Gunderson 2000. The discussion is a condensation of issues raised in Bourdieu 1990.

87. Note, then, that Sandy also wrote it. See the “Cult of the Past” section of his *Apuleius* book (1997:49–88). Vessey appears in Sandy’s bibliography but with an asterisk indicating that it appeared “too late for [him] to take account of [it]” (257). The cult of the “Cult of the Past” thus reproduces itself semiautonomously.

of abstract knowing itself: the knower is truly superfluous, if not something of an embarrassment.

There is something scandalous if not mean-spirited in my making comments about Holford-Strevens as a person or about the predilections of Henry. This is “unfair”: arguments are to be evaluated in their own right. The rule of law crumbles if the *auctoritas* of *ratio* is circumvented. Or at a minimum (maximum?), the *usus* of contemporary *Altertumswissenschaft* is violated. To turn the subject of the argument, the one who makes the argument, for example, Holford-Strevens, into the object of an argument, this is a nasty bit of conversion. And yet it is what each of us does to Gellius. *Nos quoque!* But, I ask, was I ever commenting on anything but Holford-Strevens as conjured by the *Aulus Gellius*? Does not the “real” Holford-Strevens of necessity escape my poisoned pen?

Despite all our scrupulous attention to the rules of pure knowledge, we nevertheless keep producing impure texts and logical hybrids. Doubtless this inability to construct transcendental knowledge will occasion a certain despair. However, Aulus Gellius, authored by the *Noctes Atticae*, need not occasion displaced self-hatred, as is noted by Holford-Strevens, authored by the *Aulus Gellius*. The fertile intersection between subjects and discourse need not be articulated as a bleak game of mastery and submission and subjectification via objectification. Archive fever, *mal de capitulum*, can occasion a lively albeit consumptive vitality spent atop *Der Zauberberg des Wissens*.

How many ὄρη in a *Berg*? In this *Berg*?

Quod erat demonstrandum. Quod est demonstrandum.

LIBER OCTAVVS



Lectionum Lectores Capitula et Reliquiae

I

“Hesterna noctu” rectene an cum uitio dicatur et quaenam super istis uerbis grammatica traditio sit; item quod decemuiri in XII tabulis “nox” pro “noctu” dixerunt.

... last night or last *Night* or *Last Night*? *Hesterna* and/or *Ultima*? But what of *Futura*?

II

Quid mihi usu uenerit interpretari et quasi effingere uolenti locos quosdam Platonicos Latina oratione.

III

Quid significet in ueterum libris scriptum “plerique omnes”; et quod ea uerba accepta a Graecis uidentur.

IV

Lepidissima altercatio Fauorini philosophi aduersus quendam intempestiuum de ambiguitate uerborum disserentem; atque inibi uerba quaedam ex Naeuio poeta et Cn. Gellio non usitate collocata; atque ibidem a P. Nigidio origines uocabulorum exploratae.

APPENDIX



Futurum erat / Futurum est

I

Quomodo auctor finem inire debeat.

In conclusion . . . Thus we can see . . . *Concludere*: to bring it all together by closing it all up in a confined space. Claustrophilia. *Appendere*: to cause to be suspended, to hang. *Appendix*: something supplementary tacked on to a larger whole, an appendage. Hence I conclude with an appended supplement, a testimony to a species of archival claustrophobia. Some will say it is the coda that wags the dog, an open confession of a variety of ill-disguised depravities. Others will say that a long-suspended debt is finally paid out by weight and closed off. Here *concludere* would converge with *appendere*.¹

II

Quod δόγμα σαυτοῦ πεποιῆσαι furti indicum sit.

This book is already too long. And yet at this point I ought to insert into it James Porter's *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*.² The whole is likely needed. Perhaps parts would do. In any case, I would not name Porter; he would be Gellius (on Pomponius) to my Macrobius. That is how much I adore his book: I would steal it. I would "assent" to it. To provide more context/*contextus* for this homespun fantasy of (ill-)gotten philology, I would probably also weave into the weaving together of "my" stolen work/works a few additional threads pilfered from elsewhere. Thus, given my interest in

1. "The terms closed and open, in other words, are complicit with each other" (Martindale 1993:38).

2. Foucault 1973:342 offers but a glimpse of the promise of Nietzsche, philology, and the future. Porter at last makes good on (Foucault's) Nietzsche's promise.

the revenant, I would need to add my opinion as well and to cast a vote along with Pierre Kossowski's *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*.³

III

Fauorinus detertere uolens ac depellere adulescentes a genethliacis et quibusdam aliis id genus, qui prodigiosis artibus futura omnia dicturos pollicentur, nullo pacto adeundos eos esse consulendosque huiusmodi argumentis concludebat: "Aut aduersa" inquit "euentura dicunt aut prospera."

A philological Nietzsche who is perhaps less familiar to contemporary philologists can be found in Foucault. I would like to explore some of Foucault's questions and the manner in which Foucault's (re)writing of (himself as) Nietzsche affects the way we might ourselves think through the problems of the antiquarian and the archive. Foucault (re)formulates Nietzsche's rules of reading and offers them as a guide to exploring the power of discourse.

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault paints a portrait of the genealogist.⁴ The genealogist's work is "grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary."⁵ Genealogy discovers a scandalous origin: disparity.⁶ Genealogy discovers, then, what Gellius himself shamelessly discloses from the outset. After such a proclamation Gellius remains hard to read only to the extent that reading as a genealogist is something we cannot bring ourselves to do.

This situation yields the labor of thinking through a proposition such as "emergence designates a place of confrontation," especially when this place turns out to be a "nonplace," a pure distance.⁷ We see endless confrontation in the nonplace of the *Noctes*, but we do not want to imagine that anything is emerging there. "Gellius" might emerge there, but only as a Gellius who was always already there: the text merely reflects the image of a now-departed Gellius. For us the text is not the nonplace where the real Gellius is really happening. For us the text is not the anachronistic atopic archive where Gellius/*Gellius* can be seen emerging in the here and now.

"But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different

3. Klossowski 1997.

4. Compare also the definition of genealogy at Foucault 1997e:118.

5. Foucault 1997b:369.

6. Foucault 1997b:372.

7. Foucault 1997b:377.

game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations.”⁸ We are reluctant to play genealogists and to record the stories of these “interpretations” that the *Noctes* (re)produces by way of (re)staging the emergence of knowledge itself. Crisis, criticism, confrontation: they are everywhere within the *Noctes*; they also clearly lie “behind” the *Noctes*, and so too are they provoked by the *Noctes*, a book that inspires its readers to confront it/rewrite it. Nevertheless, the historical view is hard for us to shake. We do not want to confront our own interpretation that declares that everything has a historical basis and so also a historical explanation. The story of historicism itself, then, is not something we would eagerly submit to the meticulous methods of genealogy.⁹

The concept designated “Author of the *Noctes*” exerts a claustrophilic force on interpretation that forestalls genealogical readings of the *Noctes*. By means of the author we can come to all sorts of “conclusions” about this text. Meanwhile, the claustrophobic openness of the *Noctes* is such that it reauthors itself time and again. Is Ennius its author, or is Gellius? Is Gellius its author, or is Macrobius? The list continues to infinity. The Gellian self establishes its self-relation by means of accumulating the already-said.¹⁰ But the already-said is also the already-written. This self compiles the bookish, the already-compiled. It is not just a “real” Varro who inhabits the psyche of a “real” Gellius, but so too does a book Varro inhabit a book Gellius. A nonhybridized, nontextual original cannot be located.

And yet the spectral figure of the author is conjured precisely to lend a sort of purity to the emergence of the text that a gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary reading of it would never be able to produce. What is an author? A constant level of value. A field of conceptual coherence. A stylistic unity. A historical figure.¹¹ Jerome’s categories do not fit well with

8. Foucault 1997b:378.

9. Foucault 1997b:384. Compare the scandal provoked by Hayden White’s tropological reading of historiography. We should likewise heed the reservations of Kennedy concerning “a discourse of history, which seeks to ground itself in the actuality of the past” (1993:7). The antinomy between text and history cannot be dissolved, and neither side is capable of articulating the last word (Kennedy 1993:10). Kennedy reads this very impasse as an enabling condition of meaning itself and the site of a politics of interpretation (1993:11–12). The existence of such a politics ought not to occasion a scandal. And yet, by and large, it does: the will to hermeneutic power that would make “a reading” of a text into “the reading” (Kennedy 1993:12) perpetually dictates that the Republic of Letters needs a first among its equals.

10. Compare Foucault 1997c:211.

11. Foucault 1997f:214. See Porter 2000:63 on Nietzsche’s anticipation of Foucault’s question in his own handling of “The Homer Question.”

the *Noctes* as we find them: their level of value is inconstant; they are incoherent; they are disunified; they are allochronological and parachronological. Who could author such a text?

The author is more usefully described as a projection of operations that are being applied to the text.¹² The *disparilitas* of the *Noctes* as a hermeneutical conundrum ought to disrupt the sense of Gellius. However, the *idée fixe* that Gellius is himself a fixed figure persists. The “Gellius” one sees, though, is an index of the style of reading that has been applied to the *Noctes*. Today a specific Gellius tends to emerge in the confrontation with the text, a Gellius with fairly fixed outlines: he was a somewhat simple man, in a bit over his head, affable, but highly fallible. He is not, then, on this reading a function, a plural self, a “character” or characters added to the text.¹³ He is a complex and semicomical unity that explains (away) the many difficulties of the archive titled the *Noctes Atticae*. “Gellius,” then, serves as a limitation imposed on meaning.¹⁴

The proper name prevents language from going to infinity. There is no recursion, no infinite regress: “Gellius” forestalls such. And yet “I” have obnoxiously shown that the logic of antiquarianism nevertheless does move in an infinite spiral. This movement occurs, moreover, not just in spite of the proper name but even because of it. As soon as the name is the name of an archivist, the logic of the archive seeps out and binds itself to the logic of the name: Gellius becomes *Gellius*, Varro *Varro*, Macrobius *Macrobius*. In the case of antiquarianism these two logics are “symbiotic” as well as “syngraphic.” One should note, then, that a συγγραφεύς is a historian. It’s just that “history” ought to make way for genealogy in this case if we are to fully appreciate what is happening.

The world of speech and the universe of citation regularly blur. Living presence and virtual, bookish quasi presence are conflated. *Conflare*: to melt down, forge, and make by combining. A special subject is forged in the quixotic fires of antiquarianism: the authentic copy, a Menard, the author of the *Quixote*. You can get as many duplicates made as you wish, but no two are in fact actually alike despite being identical.

The infinity of the library itself, especially Borges’s “Library of Babel,” is never felt as such. There may be a threat that language will talk only to itself, that the subject will be rendered superfluous to it, that books might run away with the subject.¹⁵ But “I” do not take it all that seriously: the

12. Foucault 1997f:213.

13. Foucault 1997f:216.

14. Foucault 1997f:221.

15. Foucault 1997a:99–101.

library writes into itself the librarians. The subject is by no means superfluous or incidental. It is symbiotic. Still, lest we exult in the vitalism of this proposition, we must write into our history of this “life” that it is also syngraphic. The syn- compounds are themselves compounded and amalgamated.

Is Gellius chimerical? That is, is he an “impossible” conjunction of beasts? Foucault’s *Order of Things* opens with questions such as these. Inspired by Borges, Foucault wonders if certain conjunctions are possible only as text, if certain beasts can only “live” a bookish life. What, he wonders, of the “and,” “in,” and “on” that make a possible space for the impossible to come together?¹⁶ Foucault invites us to imagine what set of rules enables such impossibilities to “exist” at the same place and at the same time. Existence in this case, though, designates only the existence of a proposition, of the thing that stands forth as a function of a set of rules and within a table (of contents). The rules of the *épistémè* matter: they materialize what counts as knowledge, what is known, and, hence, how one relates to what one knows.¹⁷

The antiquarian *épistémè* is “untimely.” In general, the thinker of today is a historian and thinks according to the rules of historicist thought: “All knowledge is rooted in a life, a society, and a language that have a history. . . . [H]istoricism always implies a certain philosophy, or at least a certain methodology, of living comprehension (in the element of the *Lebenswelt*), of interhuman communication (against a background of social structure), and of hermeneutics (as the re-apprehension through the manifest meaning of the discourse of another meaning at once secondary and primary, that is, more hidden but also more fundamental).”¹⁸ A certain configuration of the subject is entailed by historicist thought. Only certain morphologies of “the individual” are available within historicist norms.

The antiquarian archive, the *épistémè* that the *Noctes* propagates, does not obey these same rules. Accordingly, a historicist account of “the antiquarian” runs into a paradox: history must delineate a creature in whom it does not itself believe. It must conjure an image of a chimera even as it declares that such monsters can exist only in books. More importantly,

16. Foucault 1973:vx–xix. Compare as well the earlier discussion of the preposition *pro*.

17. See also Deleuze 1988:51: “Knowledge is a practical assemblage, a ‘mechanism’ of statements and visibilities. There is therefore nothing behind knowledge (although, as we shall see, there are things outside of knowledge).” Later on the same page we read: “There are only practices, or positivities, which are constitutive of knowledge: the discursive practices of statements, or the non-discursive practices of visibilities.”

18. Foucault 1973:372–73.

though, the attempt to deploy historicist knowledge in relation to the *Noctes* inevitably yields a surplus and supplement even as something always gets lost. The *Noctes* is too disparate to be summarized and its author is too “inauthentic” to be subjected to the subjectivation of biography. No matter how much historical context is written into or gotten out of the *Noctes*, this sober and level-headed approach still cannot save us from the archive fever of this text that rewrites its readers as they rewrite it. The synchrony within the text—a heterochrony according to our rules—overflows the boundary of the text itself and produces heteroclitic and heteronomous effects on its readers.

Within categories one makes mistakes; outside of them one is stupid.¹⁹ We can today read a variety of catalogs of categories of Gellian thought, indices to the *Noctes*, tables that delineate the contents. And yet none of them exactly satisfies. Everything is not in its place; there is not a place for everything. In fact, one wonders if it is possible to form a truly categorical statement about the *Noctes* such that it would not be somehow refuted by at least one moment in the *Noctes*. Meanwhile, the more time one spends reading/writing Gellius, the less categorical one’s own thought becomes, the more chimerical one’s own *capitulum* feels, joined to a body that no longer feels quite one’s own.

And so we would do well to take to heart Foucault’s admonitions against taking too much to heart some beloved categories. Tradition, influence, development and evolution, spirit, genres, the unity of the book, or the oeuvre: Foucault is ready to put all of these in question.²⁰ What emerges when we confront them with the archive? The procedure is, then, genealogical. The results are something Foucault will designate as archaeology.

The archaeological perspective allows different questions to be asked of antiquarianism and the *Noctes*. Antiquarianism can be reread as a discourse, as a manner of formulating statements and treating objects. It emerges as a (hybrid) system of thought/thinking that is also generative of thought, that organizes thought, that enables “statements” to be formulated.²¹

Bold hypotheses can be formulated in the wake of this confrontation. New questions can be asked. Is something like the *Noctes* an archive inasmuch as it tells no “story” and instead only transcribes statements of a

19. See Foucault 1997d:359–62. Compare Deleuze 1994:151: “The worst literature produces *sottisiers*, while the best (Flaubert, Baudelaire, Bloy) was haunted by the problem of stupidity. By giving this problem all its cosmic, encyclopaedic and gnoseological dimensions, such literature was able to carry it as far as the entrance to philosophy itself.” See also Deleuze 1994:275–76 on Bouvard and Pécuchet.

20. Foucault 1972:21–23.

21. See Foucault 1972:106–17.

similar order according to a “necessity” emerging within the discourse itself?²² This perspective remains viable in spite of the regular portrait within the *Noctes* of the activity of grammarians as a worldly practice. In fact, it is precisely in the obsession with the representation of antiquarianism as a practice that one can note a certain oscillation, an oscillation that exposes the discursivity of the world as well as the worldliness of discursivity.

Deleuze describes Foucault’s archaeological statements thus: “There are many places from which any subject can produce the same statement, and they vary greatly. But precisely because different individuals can intervene in each case, a statement accumulates into a specific object which then becomes preserved, transmitted or repeated. This accumulation resembles the building up of a stock of provisions; it is not the opposite of rarity, but an effect of this same rarity. In this way it replaces notions of origin and return to origins: like Bergsonian memory, a statement preserves itself within its own space and continues to exist while this space endures or is reconstituted.”²³ Different subjects make the same statement. The statement abides as such when accumulated within a certain kind of space. We already know the name for this locus of accumulation. It is a *penus litterarum* that gathers heterogeneous objects

Deleuze later distinguishes between the subject and the statement: “The subject is the product of phrases or dialectic and has the character of a first person with whom discourse begins, while the statement is an anonymous function which leaves a trace of subject only in the third person, as a derived function.”²⁴ The challenge is, then, to retain the disparity of the antiquarian statement within our own archaeological account of antiquarianism. This statement both creates a specific topology of knowledge and abides within it. The subject who occupies this terrain, the antiquarian, is the subject of this knowledge in the sense that both he and his knowledge are thinkable only in tandem. The antiquarian is the concrete agent of the reproduction of the conditions of production that subtend his own discourse. Despite the trope of masters and mastery, though, the *penus* of accumulated provisions that belong to this domain governs the economic question of antiquarian knowledge (*rationes*). The dream of a top-down juridical imposition of rules (*rationes*) is itself only a product of the fantasy of knowledge that the antiquarian statement engenders in that derived

22. Confront Foucault 1972:126–29.

23. Deleuze 1988:4.

24. Deleuze 1988:15.

function known by the name of “the scholar.” We must strive, then, to see Caesar’s vestibule not as a real place but instead as a nodal point of the topography of an antiquarian knowledge that attempts to ground its own authority by pointing to a law external to itself.

IV

Semper ego lector tantum?

Derrida announces the revolutionary possibilities of ghosts, of the spirit that is untimely, of the *Geist/Gespenst* that struggles to be a future to come even as it runs the risk of being but a farcical return, a play staged in Roman dress on the Eighteenth Brumaire. Derrida announces both the revolutionary and the counterrevolutionary possibilities of ghosts.

Inheritance implies the reaffirmation of a debt. One’s stores are emptied as they are filled: what was another’s is/is not now “mine.” For the past is not simply dead and gone. It looks back at those who appropriate it. The spectral encounter is an encounter with the body of *someone* as *someone other*.²⁵ The ghostly *corpus*, though, and the foreign body, can be reread as the haunting of “my” book of excerpts and annotations—this product of my cannibalistic ruminations and digestions—by the bodies of texts consumed. As an author of a *corpus*, my spirit is haunted by the notional presence of the spirit of the author of the books I read. “This spectral *someone other looks at us*, we feel ourselves being looked at by it, outside of any synchrony, even before and beyond any look on our part, according to an absolute anteriority (which may be on the order of generation, of more than one generation) and asymmetry, according to an absolutely unmasterable disproportion.”²⁶

Disparilitas marks the moment of impossible incorporation of body and spirit, life and text, past and present (and future-to-come). “Let us consider first of all, the radical and necessary *heterogeneity* of an inheritance, the difference without opposition that has to mark it, a ‘disparate’ and a quasi-juxtaposition without dialectic (the very plural of what we will later call Marx’s spirits). An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction to reaffirm by choosing*.”²⁷ (Derrida’s [Blanchot’s]) Marx’s messianism amounts to a moment when the encounter with the disparate will take

25. Derrida 1994:7.

26. Derrida 1994:7.

27. Derrida 1994:16, original emphasis.

place, when the heterogeneous will not be either missed or mistaken for the homogeneous. “It remains to be thought how a disparate could still, itself, hold together, and if one can ever speak of the *disparate itself*, selfsame, of a sameness without property.”²⁸ Derrida proposes a revolutionary future, an encounter unlike any other with the other: “Not to maintain together the disparate, but to put ourselves there where the disparate itself *holds together*, without wounding the dis-juncture, the dispersion, or the difference, without effacing the heterogeneity of the other. We are asked (enjoined, perhaps) to turn *ourselves* over to the future.”²⁹

“‘The relation to others—that is to say, justice,’ writes Levinas,” writes Derrida.³⁰ What is at stake, then, is doing justice to a text, doing justice with a text. To read justly, to inherit justly: this relationship to the spectral author authorizes a certain kind of subject, the just one. Therefore, while I find it easy to tell Marx from Gellius, it is less easy to see the distinction between the kind of revolution proposed by Derrida’s deconstructive Marxism and the kind of revolution entailed by a “just” reading of Gellius. Who will we have become, that is, when we have learned to encounter anew Gellius’s *disparilitas*? Philologists of the future-to-come, I suppose. But how is one to conspire to conjure this future spirit? One perhaps makes a beginning by thinking unhistorically, thinking with the time out of joint.

The archive “makes an impression”; it regulates memory traces, remembering, forgetting. *Hypomnēmata* are memnotechnical supplements.³¹ In Latin, then, *commentarii*.³² The archive has its own *oiko-nomy*, its regulated economy of (domestic) circulation.³³ It is, then, a *penus litterarum*. But the archive always also entails both inside and outside, the very distinction between the two: it is both domestic and psychic even as it is also a publication of expropriation and an external supplement.³⁴

The archive is a legacy, a pledge, a token of the future. And yet the specific mechanism of Gellius’s archival technology itself attempts to constrain the very future that the archive makes unlimited even as it delimits it.³⁵ Gellius, the legate of the past’s future pledges, leaves to us, his children, a

28. Derrida 1994:17, original emphasis.

29. Derrida 1994:29, original emphasis.

30. Derrida 1994:23.

31. Derrida 1998:11.

32. LSJ, s.v. ὑπόμνημα. The terms both overlap and are distinct. But the divergences seem to be largely internal to the identical split in both words: notes/notebooks. That is, both are either provisional or more official.

33. Derrida 1998:7.

34. Compare Derrida 1998:11–13.

35. Archival technology: Derrida 1998:17–18; In-finitude of archive fever: Derrida 1998:20.

family archive. He writes a circle around us, *scribere/circumscribere*: we are put in a specific place. And yet the place is only virtual, the roles only notional/spectral. He conjures us; we conjure him. But not only is the thing only ever refound and never just found; so too does the refound object always exceed any preliminary *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen*. What one sees written on the *Wunderblock* of the archive always exceeds any simple notion of the original, the authentic, and the “other.” What one (re)finds in the archives is the always-already one’s (stolen) own.

The question of the archive as apparatus of memory is not an element of the familiar critique of the “adequacy” of our accounts and the possibilities of historical accuracy. The qualities of the archive are instead constative of constataion itself, of the “order of things.” Derrida and Foucault, each determined to keep silent about the other, nevertheless can corroborate each other’s testimony.³⁶ The disjointedness of any “formed” concept is a function of the problem of archivization itself.³⁷ More importantly still, we don’t have the concept “archive” available to us.³⁸ The archive itself is a disjointed concept because its own timeliness is out of joint: it is both an archive of/for the past and an archive of/for the future.³⁹

The paralogical logic of the archive never closes off the future and always opens itself to the future no matter what claustrophilic “will to conclusion” might possess any given archivist. “The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed.”⁴⁰ The scene of reading is inscribed into the archive in advance.⁴¹ There is, then, no meta-archive, only the becoming-bookish of the archivist, who, seated within the library, catalogs books of books.⁴² The archivist reads and therewith desires to relive the other,⁴³ but in so doing he or she both lives and writes his or her very own (in)authentic life. The archivist “is” *dispar*, neither book nor man. And even within these categories there are further disparities: a nonsingular book, a nonsingular man. The question is recursive.

One must not shirk the important labor of deciding what it means to do someone/something justice.⁴⁴ Critical criticism: a decision to be made,

36. Derrida wants to imagine “a project of a general archiviology” (1994:36). The proposal is Foucauldian.

37. Derrida 1998:29.

38. Derrida 1998:33.

39. See Derrida 1998:36, which specifically conjures the Marx of Derrida 1994.

40. Derrida 1998:68.

41. Derrida 1998:67.

42. No meta-archive: Derrida 1998:67; Borges’s “Library of Babel” “glosses” this passage.

43. Compare Derrida 1998:98.

44. See specters, justice, and the future in Derrida 1994:175–76.

an act to be performed. The difficult encounter with *disparilitas* and the archive does not so much lay the ground for as it is the very ground of doing justice by oneself in the course of a fever dream, a nighttime encounter with Gellius/*Gellius*. No time (un)like the present. There has never been a better time to read my *Nox/Noctes*. The final question is what is the tense of *scripserim*, *legerim*, and *uenerim*?

FRAGMENTA ADESPOTA



- [1] . . . as a purely formal exercise . . .
- [2] Discourse on method: a *dissertatio* on μέθοδος, on the road taken with/after.
- [3] Cf. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*; Anonymous, *Alf Layla wa Layla*; Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*; Rabelais, *Gargantua et Pantagruel*; Cervantes Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*; Potocki, *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*; Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; Borges, *Obras completas*.¹
- [4] Is an argument in the form of a novel a novel form of argument? Not at all.
- [5] . . . the content of the form . . .²
- [6] The text has relatively little sense of its own contents, but not none.
- [7] Rosalind MacLachlan, “What Drives a Writer to Epitomise His Own Work?”
- [8] . . . as can be clearly seen in Walser’s *Jakob von Gunten*.
- [9] . . . Bartleby’s heroic “I would prefer not to.” Few have ever proven to be his equal.
- [10] *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, Gentleman sagely begins
’ere it begins Ταρασσει τοὺς Ἀνθρώπους οὐ τὰ Πράγματα, ἀλλὰ τὰ

1. [codd in aliqq. leg., ad fin., ‘B.D.’ aut ‘Mutineer,’ aut ‘Lenny Bruce Is Dead.’—Hend.]

2. [*The Content of the Form?*—Ed.]

περι τῶν Πραγμάτων, Δογματα.³ I would like to assent to it, to make its borrowed dogma my own.

- [11] *Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert, es kömmt drauf an, sie zu verändern.* The philologists are philosophers of the word as world and world as word. *Alles gesellschaftliche Leben ist wesentlich praktisch.* Their social life is essentially practical: it consists of the practice of attempting to circulate interpretations without altering them. *Das Zusammenfallen des Ändern[s] der Umstände und der menschlichen Tätigkeit oder Selbstveränderung kann nur als revolutionäre Praxis gefaßt und rationell verstanden werden.* Their praxis is nevertheless revolutionary: to cite is to supplement and to alter. The self is transformed as well. *Der Streit über die Wirklichkeit oder Nichtwirklichkeit des Denkens—das von der Praxis isoliert ist—ist eine rein scholastische Frage.* All questions, though, become pointedly scholastic as thought subtracts itself from the very life it leads. Such a world of hermeneutics could readily be altered did one so choose. It is mostly a question of *emphasis*. See Derrida 1994:51 on performative interpretation.
- [12] . . . the actions in the text are the actions of the text . . .
- [13] . . . determining the irregular within the canonical . . .
- [14] Are we in the presence of a “Situationist Manifesto”? A *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?*
- [15] “In the morning we had talked of old families, and the respect due to them. JOHNSON. ‘Sir, you have a right to that kind of respect, and are arguing for yourself. I am for supporting the principle, and am disinterested in doing it, as I have no such right.’ BOSWELL. ‘Why, Sir, it is one more incitement to a man to do well.’ JOHNSON. ‘Yes, Sir, and it is a matter of opinion, very necessary to keep society together. What is it but opinion, by which we have a respect for authority, that prevents us, who are the rabble, from rising up and pulling down you who are gentlemen from your places, and saying, “We will be gentlemen in our turn”? Now, Sir, that respect for authority is much more easily granted to a man whose father has had it, than to an upstart, and so Society is more easily supported.’

3. [The same irregular capitalization, punctuation, and accentuation of the Greek can be found in Sterne’s novel. The epigram is originally from Epictetus’s *Enchiridion* 5.1.—Ed.]

BOSWELL. 'Perhaps, Sir, it might be done by the respect belonging to office, as among the Romans, where the dress, the toga, inspired reverence.' JOHNSON. 'Why, we know very little about the Romans.'"

- [16] Even the painstakingly documentary can be surreal: witness Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*.
- [17] Was Lucan's Erichtho a prophetess of philology, she who gathered pieces of *corpora* fallen on the field? Consider for a moment: Nigidius Figulus as necromancer antiquarian; Sallust's Catalinarians as necromantic, cannibalistic conspirators; Gellius as reviver of Nigidius; Macrobius as a conspiratorial table reviving Gellius so as to cannibalize him: *coniuratio* becomes *symbola* (*Saturnalia* 1.7.4 becomes 1.7.7). NB: Nigidius located lost coins (Apuleius, *Apology* 42). Unfortunately Kelly's *Conspiracy of Allusion* does not help us much in this regard. Lloyd-Jones's *Blood for the Ghosts* does. *Nachlebenstudien*: ghost-studies. His text is as filled with authoritative characters as is the *Noctes*.
- [18] . . . gallimaufry . . .
- [19] *Ah! messieurs! si beau qu'il soit il ne vaut pas la Pologne. S'il n'y avait pas de Pologne, il n'y aurait pas de Polonais! FIN.* This is a philological argument, no matter how you look at it. The preceding exchange and its *ratio etymologica* make as much clear.⁴
- [20] The classicist has long been caught up in the polyphony of novelistic discourse. And we learn from *Middlemarch* all about the *philia* inspired by Mr. Casaubon's philology. Who will objectify whom? Whose posthumous legacy will guide the shape of things to come? The question hangs over the characters, but it extends to authors and genres as well. A lover's discourse or even a tête-à-tête are generally uncommon and also considered to be scandalous. On this question one should also weigh and consider Nuttall's *Dead from the Waist Down*.
- [21] . . . the newly reedited works of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus being an occasion for celebration.⁵ Law's book on him should open the

4. [PERE UBU: Mer farouche et inhospitalière qui baigne le pays appelé Germanie, ainsi nommé parce que les habitants de ce pays sont tous cousins germains.

MERE UBU: Voilà ce que j'appelle de l'érudition. On dit ce pays fort beau.—Ed.]

5. [Presumably Löfstedt 2003.—Ed.]

door to a reappraisal not just of medieval grammar but of ancient as well.⁶ Bakhtin pointed the way in *The Dialogic Imagination* even if nobody bothered to note his *indicium*.⁷

[22] ... a book written with an eye to preposterity ...

[23] ... ἀνωμαλία ... *rare numquam; raro nonnumquam; rarenter rarenter. sed "rare capitur" apud Plautum capere potest.*⁸

[24] ... *deest* ...

[25] ... in a day and age where everyone is self-archiving: digital video cameras are ubiquitous, blogs proliferate. Trips to the Louvre are now experienced through the video camera's viewfinder: there is no direct experience of the images. La Giaconda smiles ambiguously at you when you return home and put the tape in the player so as to encounter her first and exclusively on television. There is, then, no vacation, only the record thereof. *Ich sehe gern nur fern.*

[26] ... googlewhack ...

[27] ... dogmatism as it is generally understood should give way to ...

[28] ... mash-up ...

[29] ... "method reader" ...⁹

[30] What if not just the author was dead, but so too the reader, his posthumous *Doppelgänger*? Would we have to call the latter the ghost of a ghost?

[31] ... to wit: the out-of-joint self of Dennis Potter's *Singing Detective*—with which we contrast the decapitated future most-imperfect of *Cold Lazarus*—the studied archaism of the films of Guy Madden, and archival frenzy of the Brothers Quay's *Cabinet of Jan Svankmajer*. Within the last, see especially "Pursuit of the Object" and "The Child's Divining of the Object."

[32] ... *ein Bildungsroman* ...

[33] ... idle speculation ...

6. [This is apparently Law 1995.—Ed.]

7. [See p. 252.—Ed.]

8. [This appears to be part of a discussion of *Noctes Atticae* 2.25.—Ed.]

9. [Perhaps the quotation marks should be removed from the phrase.—Ed.]

- [34] ... *non liquet* ...
- [35] ... *das Ding an sich* as in Jeff Koons's "New Hoover Quik-Broom & New Hoover Celebrity IV." Commentary is a superfluous and unwelcome supplement to the noumenological encounter thus provoked. Although to provoke this situation is itself a species of commentary.
- [36] ... whose books also measured his (solipsistic) life. See the *Weather Diaries*. Meanwhile, his psychic life is "further revealed" in the unending volumes of the excerpted, traced, and iterated tale succinctly titled *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*.¹⁰
- [37] ... as we ourselves dawdle in Caesar's vestibule.
- [38] ... difference and repetition ...¹¹
- [39] ... "the book to end all books" ...
- [40] ... whether Paul is dead ...
- [41] "Great Caesar's Ghost!"
- [42] M. R. James, *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*.
- [43] ... the Voynich Manuscript ... the Codex Seraphinianus ...
- [44] ... "Ozymandias"¹² ...
- [45] When they will have read, it will be theirs to choose a role in the following scene as they should see fit:

SOSIA

Certe edepol, si quicquamst aliud quod credam aut certo sciam,
 credo ego hac noctu Nocturnum obdormiuisse ebrium.
 nam neque se Septentriones quoquam in caelo commouent,
 neque se Luna quoquam mutat atque uti exorta est semel,
 nec Iugulae neque Vesperugo neque Vergiliae occidunt.
 ita statim stant signa, neque nox quoquam concedit die.

10. [Henry Darger is obviously meant.—Ed.]

11. [*Difference and Repetition?*—Ed.]

12. [This may be an allusion to Martindale 1993.—Ed.]

MERCVRIVS

Perge, Nox, ut occepisti, gere patri morem meo:
optumo optume optumam operam das, datam pulchre locas.

SOSIA

Neque ego hac nocte longiorem me uidisse censeo,
nisi item unam, uerberatus quam pependi perpetem;
eam quoque edepol etiam multo haec uicit longitudine.

[46] ... wohl ...

[47] *XLVII fragmenta adespota: Chushingura* (忠臣蔵).

SPVRIA



- [1] This question is authoritatively treated in . . .
- [2] As I have written elsewhere . . .
- [3] Gellius meant to . . .
- [4] . . . representative . . .
- [5] . . . typical . . .
- [6] Naturally . . .
- [7] In the middle portion of his career Foucault resumes and modifies Nietzsche's genealogy. Foucault thus entertains both genealogy and archaeology as major metaphors for his own enterprise. In the period just prior to *Discipline and Punish* and the emergence of "power" as a dominant theme, Foucault lingers on questions of the archive, of the library, and of the intercommunication of texts both laterally and across time. The resulting discussions clearly enable a variety of fruitful returns to the antiquarian discourse of antiquity. And yet with the advent of power and then the turn to sexuality, the archive slowly withers away from Foucault's thought. In fact, when he makes his own return to classical antiquity, Foucault is preoccupied with ethics and finding a version of the "technologies of the self" that might be liberatory for the modern subject. Even though Foucault avoids falling into a fetish for the high classical, he nevertheless does end up privileging authors like Seneca who are advocates for a specifically aristocratic self-relation. But if we were to return to antiquity with an eye not just for the ethics of the self in general but instead with an interest in the power plays of the archive as well, we

could generate a much more complex portrait of the fertility of book power than Foucault himself provides.

- [8] . . . decoding in general and cryptography in particular . . .
- [9] It is interesting that we do not hear more of the sort of playful inauthenticity that Grafton analyses.¹ There is plenty of room to imagine that it is in fact taking place.
- [10] . . . *ergo propter hoc* . . .
- [11] . . . and I have decided that my favorite Henderson piece is the one you wrote in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* under the *nom de plume/guerre* “Zetzel.”²
- [12] . . . πρὸς τὸ συναγαγεῖν, εἰ δυνατόν, ἅπαντα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην βιβλία. Compare πῶς καὶ τίνι γένει πολιτείας ἐπικρατηθέντα σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην οὐχ ὅλοις πεντήκοντα καὶ τρισὶν ἔτεσιν ὑπὸ μίαν ἀρχὴν ἔπεσε τὴν Ῥωμαίων.³
- [13] “On the one hand, the unconscious is, as I have just defined it, something negative, something ideally inaccessible. On the other hand, it is something quasi real. Finally, it is something which will be realised in the symbolic, or, more precisely, something which, thanks to the symbolic progress which takes place in analysis, *will have been*.”⁴
- [14] *Die Rätsel der alten Ägypter waren ebenso die Rätsel für die Ägypter selbst.*

1. [Grafton 1990.—Ed.]

2. [Zetzel 1998.—Ed.]

3. [Aristeas, *Epistula* 9 and Polybius, *Historiae* 1.1.5. See also Polybius, *Historiae* 39.8.7.—Ed.]

4. [Lacan 1988:158, original emphasis. There is an ongoing dispute as to whether this fragment belongs among the *spuria*.—Ed.]

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